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LONDON: HODDER AND STOUGHTON.

# THE GREAT ENGLISH LETTER-WRITERS

By  
WILLIAM J. DAWSON  
and  
CONINGSBY W. DAWSON

*VOLUME II*

HODDER AND STOUGHTON  
LONDON MCMVIII

*Butler and Tanner The Selwood Printing Works Frome and London*

## PREFACE

THE purpose of The Reader's Library is to present in succinct form a survey of English literature. The method adopted is to assemble under generic titles the best specimens of the various branches of literature, in such a way that each volume shall be of equal service to the scholar and the general reader.

The first two volumes of the series, *The Great English Letter-Writers*, are now presented to the public. The selections have been carefully arranged, with a view not to chronological order so much as to the illustration of the growth of the art of letter-writing. The object of the editors has been to present what may be called a pageant-view of their theme: to show how various men and women scattered, through different ages, have borne themselves under the same crises of emotion or action. That which is obviously lost in abandoning a strictly chronological arrangement is recaptured in the introductory essays to each volume, which aim at a general historic survey of the art of letter-writing, together with a critical estimate of the writers, and of their relationship to the literature of their age. Biographical details

concerning these writers are contained in the body of the volume.

Where a subject cannot be adequately treated in one volume, as is the case with *The Great Letter-Writers*, each volume contains a separate essay, so that it may be, as far as is possible, complete in itself.

The reader is referred to the general prospectus of the series for the plan of the entire work. Among the volumes now near completion are *The Great English Essayists*, *The Great English Historians*, and *The Great English Nature-Lovers*. The method adopted in the present volumes will be pursued in all succeeding volumes.

It will be noticed, no doubt, that some letter-writers of great eminence are not as adequately represented as could be wished. The reason for this inadequate representation is found in the difficulties which are involved in copyright matter. The gratitude of the Editors is due, and is hereby expressed, to many publishers and authors, who have generously granted a very liberal use of copyright material. In some instances, however, the use of such material has been strictly limited; in others, to the great regret of the Editors it has been refused altogether.<sup>1</sup>

Every care has been taken to discover the holders of copyright, and to print nothing without express permission. In some cases, however, the Editors have been unable to trace the owner. Should any

<sup>1</sup> In the case of the Letters of Edward FitzGerald and of James Smetham.

letter be found in these volumes for which permission should have been gained, the Editors beg to state that the error is not wilful, and they offer their apologies to the undiscovered owners of the copyright.

To the following publishers and authors, who have extended their courtesy to the Editors, by allowing the use of copyright material contained in these two volumes, a word of grateful acknowledgment is due :—  
To Mr. A. G. B. Russell and Messrs. Methuen & C for the letter of William Blake to Thomas Butts, from *Letters of Wm. Blake, together with a Life*, by Frederick Latham ; to Mr. John Murray for Mr. and Mrs. Borrow's letter, from Professor Knapp's *Life of Borrow* ; to Messrs. Hodder & Stoughton for the correspondence of Charlotte Brontë, from Mr. Clement K. Shorter's *The Brontës and Their Circle* ; to Messrs. Smith, Elder & Co. for the letters of Elizabeth and Robert Browning, from Mrs. Sutherland Orr's *Life and Letters of Robert Browning* ; to Mr. John Lane for the two letters of Jane Welsh Carlyle, from *New Letters and Memorials of Jane Welsh Carlyle*, edited by Mr. Alexander Carlyle ; to Messrs. Longmans, Green & Co. for the letters of Jane Welsh and Thomas Carlyle, from *Thomas Carlyle : A History of His Life in London, 1834-1881*, by J. A. Froude, and from *Letters and Memorials of Jane Welsh Carlyle* ; to Mr. John Lane for Carlyle's letter to Mrs. Aitkin, March 11th, 1869 ; to Messrs. Longmans, Green & Co. for letters from *Thomas Carlyle : A History of the First Forty Years of His Life, 1795-1835*, by J. A. Froude ; to Mr. John Hogg for the letters of Thomas

De Quincey, from *Thomas De Quincey: His Life and Writings, with unpublished correspondence*, edited by Alexander H. Japp, LL.D. ; for the letters of Charles Dickens, to Miss Georgina Hogarth, his sister-in-law, editor with his eldest daughter of *The Letters of Charles Dickens*, published by Messrs. Chapman & Hall, Ltd. ; to Messrs. Wm. Blackwood & Sons for George Eliot's letter, from *George Eliot's Life as Related in Her Letters and Journals* ; to Mr. H. Buxton Forman for Keats' letters, from his edition of *The Complete Works of John Keats*, published by Messrs. Gowans & Gray ; to Messrs. Wm. Blackwood & Sons for the letter of Charles Lever, from Mr. Edmund Downey's *Charles Lever: His Life in his Letters* ; to Messrs. Longmans, Green & Co. for the letters of Lord Macaulay, from *Macaulay's Life and Letters*, edited by the Right Hon. Sir George Otto Trevelyan ; to Dr. Stopford A. Brooke for the letters of Frederick W. Robertson, from *The Life and Letters of Frederick W. Robertson, M. A.*, edited by Stopford A. Brooke, M.A. ; to Messrs. Sampson Low, Marston & Co., Ltd., for letters to and from Joseph Severn, from *The Life and Letters of Joseph Severn* by William Sharp ; to Mr. Lloyd Osbourne and the publishers for selections from *Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, edited by Mr. Sidney Colvin, published by Messrs. Methuen & Co. ; to Messrs. Smith, Elder & Co. for the correspondence of Thackeray, from *A Collection of Letters of Thackeray, 1847-1855*.

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## The Art and Attainment of English Letter-Writing

OF the many forms of literature, letter-writing is probably the oldest, as it is certainly the most intimate and sincere. This alone should ensure for it respect, yet upon the whole that respect has not been accorded, probably because some suspicion lingers in the minds even of acute critics that it is at best but an inferior and subsidiary form of literature.

Very little consideration is needed, however, to dispel this suspicion. To write a really good letter requires a combination of qualities at once rare in themselves and rarer still in their conjunction. Thus the writer must himself be interesting, and have interesting matter to communicate ; he must be something of an egoist, to whom his own sensations are noticeable, and worthy of notice ; he must possess both daring and freedom, for the last place where caution and reticence are required is in the familiar epistle ; he must be resolutely sincere, for the moment he begins to pose his magic wand is broken, and he becomes tedious and offensive ; he must above all possess the intimate note, for without it he will produce an essay, but not a letter. Of all these qualities perhaps the last is the rarest, for a good letter is really a page from the secret memoirs of a man. It may be a memoir of ideas or of events ; it does not

greatly matter which, so long as it contributes to our knowledge of the man. For this is the first aim of a true letter, self-revelation. In many forms of literature self-revelation is the last thing that is to be expected ; in most it would be a disturbing and offensive element. We do not need it in the historian ; we need it only partially in the essayist ; even in poetry, especially of the epic kind, it is not always wanted ; but in a letter we want this, and nothing less than this. The man who is not prepared to unlock his heart to us can never write a great letter.

It is recorded of various artists and writers that they imagined they worked better if they approached their task in the dignity of full dress ; slovenly attire seemed incompatible with dignified expression. There are certain books which undoubtedly suggest the element of elaborate decorum, but letters suggest something of the very opposite. In them the author appears in undress. He may be pictured lounging at a tavern table, sitting in a green arbour, rounding off the day beside a study fire, his studious and public self forgotten, the pose demanded by his public laid aside, the natural man alone apparent, and speaking in the accent of fearless and unrestrained vivacity. He who writes for the public must needs keep the public in his eye ; spectral reviewers throng around his table, critics watch for his misdemeanours, and he writes amid the rustle of a thousand journals and reviews. But the loud potentialities of publicity do not disturb the genuine letter-writer. He writes to gratify himself and please a friend ; he has no more notorious object in view. Were he the most famous of authors, for the time he must become a mere private person ; and unless he be capable of this spirit of detachment and divestiture, he will never

write a genuine letter. This is why George Eliot's letters are dull and Matthew Arnold's letters stiff ; they cannot forget that they are public personages. This is also why men so radically separate as Walpole and Fitzgerald write with such an easy charm ; they either despise or forget the existence of the public, and are intent upon nothing loftier than pleasant gossip about themselves, their opinions and their prejudices, their tastes and their employments. The world loves good gossip, which is after all the staple of all good conversation ; and the letter-writer is a conversationalist who does not object to being overheard.

If we bear these distinctions in mind, we shall be able to distinguish what really constitutes a good letter. In the preparation of this volume many hundreds of books have been sedulously winnowed for material, often with surprisingly poor results, even in the case of the greatest authors. Thus, for example, the biography of Charles Kingsley is a charming book, and since it consists in the main of extracts from his voluminous correspondence, one would have imagined that it was the easiest thing in the world to gather from it a large sheaf of interesting letters. Nothing of the kind has happened for the simple reason that in his most private hours Kingsley is never quite able to forget his relations with the public. He writes much, he writes well, and it argues an immense fund of good nature that he should have poured out his powers so fully in correspondence with his friends ; but because he is always conscious of his mission he produces not letters so much as elaborate treatises and essays. Mrs. Carlyle, on the contrary, can make us more interested in her finger's ache than Kingsley in his most brilliant discussions of socialism and theology. It is

the personal note we miss in Kingsley ; it is nothing but the personal note that we have in Mrs. Carlyle. And as it was with Kingsley, so it has been with many greater men ; they have had just enough egoism to make them conscious of the public, but not enough to make them forget it. Even Ruskin rarely attains this art. He, like Kingsley, was a correspondent of tireless industry, but more often than not his letters are moral or æsthetic dissertations with a name and an adieu tacked on. The very first paragraph, with its exquisite balance and antithesis, undeceives us as to the true nature of all that follows. We know that the friend to whom these brilliant paragraphs are addressed is after all a wooden horse in whose belly a printing press lies concealed.

Among the earliest letter-writers of English literature the distinction between the essay and the letter was not very carefully preserved. Addison's essays, for example, are in reality extended letters ; and it may be argued that the modern essay, which began with Addison, owes its origin to the epistolary art. The essay, nevertheless, soon took its own form and became homiletic. It had a definite theme, and was a dissertation upon that theme. So popular was this form of literature that for a long time the value of the letter was overlooked, and its peculiar characteristics were forgotten. Alexander Pope did much to re-establish the letter in popular esteem by the publication of a series of epistles which at once took the taste of the town. Among his contemporaries was Lady Mary Montagu, who recognized in the letter a form of literary expression which precisely suited her rapid and wayward pen. No travel-letters have ever been more brilliant and vivacious than hers. To the same period belongs Horace Walpole. Walpole was a man curi-

ously before his age in many things. He was the first exponent of the new romantic impulse which later on produced Scott and the *Waverley Novels*, the revival of Gothic architecture and Gilbert Scott, the Oxford Movement and Newman, the *Æsthetic* movement and Ruskin. Horace Walpole despised literature as a profession, and being himself in receipt of a handsome income from the public treasury had no occasion to practise it. Yet he was conscious of the "irritation of the idea"—as Flaubert puts it, which is the source of all literary expression. To a man so constituted and circumstanced the familiar letter afforded just that mode of literary expression which was best suited to his genius. He was by temperament and habit a keen critic of life. He was indefatigably curious. He would rise at midnight to look upon a fire. He would hasten to Temple Bar and gaze through a telescope at the blood-stained heads of the rebel lords, as eager for a new sensation as the most vulgar of the crowd. He had the quickest and the keenest eye for foibles and defects in others. He was the master of a pen at once lucid and caustic. How could such a pen be better used than in the semi-confidential epistle? He was too indolent to write history and to indifferent to reward to attempt the serious essay. But in the letter he found the exact medium that suited him. Here he could say what he would, he could record his impressions with vividness, he could be as brilliantly malicious as he chose, without fear of contradiction. Things which no sober historian, conscious of the judgment of posterity, would have dared to write, he writes. He comments on the gaudy slovenliness of the Lady Mary Montagu, her eccentric dress, her pasty complexion, and her oily hair. He pictures Wesley as a lean-faced man, as palpably an actor as Garrick. He never

mentions Lord North except to make him appear ridiculous. His one serious pursuit in life was to build, extend, alter, and adorn his mock-Gothic castle at Strawberry Hill ; and yet is it so little serious that he often mocks his own endeavours with caustic raillery. Yet, with all these defects, and perhaps because of them, he made himself the most brilliant letter-writer of his time. He did more than this, for he vindicated the place of the letter in literature, by making it a mirror held up to his time, in which we see, as in a magic crystal, all the plots, intrigues, and follies of the great, with occasional prophetic glimpses of those underlying forces which were working out a new and nobler age.

There is, however, one defect about the letters of both Lady Montagu and Horace Walpole ; they obviously assume publication. In the case of Lady Montagu, no doubt on this head is possible. She goes so far as to instruct her correspondents to preserve her letters. The result is that that element of spontaneity, which is the most charming feature of the genuine letter, is sometimes wanting. When the writer of a letter becomes conscious of the literary worth of his production, the perfume of intimacy is lost.

We turn therefore to another kind of letter, which is the genuine unpremeditated outpouring of confidential friendship. Letters of this description may be found in the biographies of most distinguished persons. It is characteristic of the small practitioner in letters that he is jealously parsimonious concerning his ideas, because he has few to spare. He will not give away the merest sweepings of his workshop for fear that some stray grain of gold may be discovered in them. But the great writer has so large a treasure that he never thinks of economy. Nothing is more

surprising than to discover what a wealth of ideas is scattered in the correspondence of men of genius. Keats will enclose verses that have since become immortal in letters which he writes to persons whose chief significance is that he loved them. His letters contain rough drafts of all the philosophic ideas on which his life and art were built ; and as the first rapid sketch of a great artist has often more fire and virility than the elaborated picture, so these rough drafts of Keats have the brilliant effervescence of a genius in its first miraculous freshness and prodigal activity. Dickens—to take a type of mind absolutely different—is equally lavish. His letters are full of pictures of life, finished with as careful an art as the greatest passages of his writings, and overflowing with a humour which is often much more natural and, vivacious. And, to take a yet more modern instance the same thing is true of Stevenson ; so true, indeed, that there is serious ground for the conclusion that his letters will be treasured and remembered when all his stories, and all but a select dozen of his essays are forgotten. Were any vindication needed of the high importance of the letter as a form of literature, such a statement as this, if it be accepted, should carry decisive conviction with it.

But quite apart from the degree of literary art which may or may not be found in a letter, there is the value which attaches to it as a revelation of personality. Many forms of literature, as we have seen, do not demand this element. We may go further, and say that they are hostile to it. The man who is definitely writing for the public is always conscious of the restraint put upon his personality by the conditions of his task. He is writing for a dim host of people whose multiplied idiosyncrasies he does not understand,

with whose view of life he has but partial acquaintance and sympathy, whose tastes and opinions he may have reason to fear, to placate, or to make allowance for. Every writer is aware of a multitude of cross-currents that deflect his aim when he addresses an unknown public. It often seems as though some wayward sprite sits upon his pen, and forces him to write something that is not at all in accordance with his real thought. The most humiliating pain of authorship is this disparity between intention and achievement. It would almost seem as if with the best intentions, to use words to express thought, they have after all been used only to conceal it ; and the sensitive writer, when he comes to read his own printed page, is dismally aware that it is quite perversely unlike the thought and sentiment which first welled up in his mind and drove him to literary expression. What he does not see is that this deflection of aim, this loss of the essential spirit of utterance, is in the main due to the disturbing sense that he is addressing a multitude of unseen and unknown auditors.

But when he addresses a single auditor, who is known, loved, and trusted, this embarrassment at once disappears. He can not only afford to be confidential and spontaneous, but in the nature of the thing he must be nothing less than this. The result is not only the free revelation of personality, but often a corresponding release of literary power. This is a characteristic very obvious and marked in Stevenson. From the mere literary point of view his letters are in many instances superior to anything that may be found in his tales and essays. His phrases have a sharp-edged natural brilliance ; they come fresh and hot from the mint of his imagination ; they are free from the artifice which characterises similar phrases

in the essays, and are by so much the more convincing and impressive. No man ever used various forms of literary expression with such a consistent aim to express himself. No modern writer has succeeded so well. Yet when we read his tales and essays we are able to see very clearly how partial the success was even at the best ; but while in his deliberate writings the suspicion of artifice is never wholly conquered, in the letters there is the essential artist, instinctive, natural, triumphantly flexible and at ease.

And this leads to a reflection that goes deeper still, viz., that in no way is a man so likely to be truly known as in his familiar letters. A single letter may often express the nature and spirit of a great man much more effectually than the best biography. We have an admirable instance of this in the brief but exquisite letter addressed by Abraham Lincoln to Mrs. Bixby of Boston, who had lost five sons in the Civil War. "I pray," he writes, "that our Heavenly Father may assuage the anguish of your bereavement, and leave you only the cherished memory of the loved and lost, and the solemn pride that must be yours to have laid so costly a sacrifice upon the altar of freedom." No one needs to be told how great and noble was the soul from which that sentence came ; by some incom-  
municable subtlety of feeling we realize the man, in all his own slow martyrdom, his patience, resoluteness, courage, and infinite tenderness of heart, in all the rarity and holiness of his own spirit ; and we do this much more perfectly than by the reading of a hundred state documents and speeches, although in each one of these there may be discovered some impress of his personality.

A letter such as this, hastily written no doubt under the immense pressure and anxiety of public affairs,

does much to reassure us that the epistolary art is not the fugitive and superseded art which many critics would have us suppose. There is no doubt some truth in the contention that the age of letter-writing is over ; but such a verdict needs much qualification. What is meant probably is that the conditions of modern life are such that there is neither the time nor the occasion for the elaborate letter. Where men lived far apart and the means of communication were expensive, they naturally did not write to one another unless they had something to communicate that seemed worth while. And because they had leisure they were able to write fully and at length. These conditions are not likely to return. No man would waste his time to-day in writing to a friend a detailed account of public events which he might be quite sure had already reached his correspondent in the morning paper. The busy man will write as little as he can on any subject ; he will use the telephone and typewriter ; and never yet was there a letter of any value dictated to an obedient machine. But this after all is only one phase of life. There are still sequestered and serene existences whose chief traffic is in ideas, affections, and emotions. Women especially are, as a rule, excellent letter-writers, because they live in their emotions. I will hazard the statement, that were I to publish a selection from the letters I have received during the last twenty years from persons whose names are totally unknown to the general public, I could produce a volume not much inferior in interest and art to the present volume. The reason for this excellence lies in the fact that the letter is and must remain the best possible vehicle for the transmission of emotion. Given a moderate command of language, a quick eye, a thoughtful mind, and a warm heart, and any

person of intelligence can produce an excellent letter. For the chief thing after all which is necessary is not elaborate leisure, but character ; not the training of the skilled writer, but the pressure of a real thought ; not leisure, but the power of a deep emotion such as Lincoln felt when he wrote to Mrs. Bixby. As long as men love, the art of letter-writing will remain.

With matters such as these we are not however greatly concerned. Our present concern is with those specimens of published epistles which justify letter-writing as a fine art. It is always a somewhat perilous thing to attempt rigid categories and characterisations, yet the following distinctions may prove useful.

Keats may be taken as the best representative of what may be called inspired letter-writing. He is in his letters, as in his poems, " of imagination all compact." He has little or no relation with the world in its sordid and habitual aspects. He is detached from it and above it, and he fills us with the sense of freedom and release. He never stirs far from his Dream-garden, which lies midway between waking and sleeping, where such things as Time, and Space, and Change have lost their exactitudes ; where man may out-distance his destiny, and live the life of the spirit, unconscious of the flesh. The real greatness of Keats is but partially revealed in his poetry. To understand the height and measure of his nature a study of his letters is compulsory ; there only do we comprehend the grounds for the verdict of Tennyson that " Keats was the greatest of us all."

Very different from Keats is Carlyle, whose letters really belong to the confessional realm of literature. He knows the world in all its sordidness, and he accuses it. But he knows himself with even more piercing vision, and he accuses himself the more bitterly. For

him the world is no Dream-garden ; it is a battlefield where the fight is almost lost, the day far spent, and he himself impotent either to turn the tide of battle or, like Joshua, to stay the sinking sun. He is a man in pain, and pain makes him prophetic. Yet there are moments of calm wisdom, when he sees to the centre of things ; more exquisite moments still when his whole heart is softened and overflowed by tenderness. It would be temerarious to say of Carlyle, as of Stevenson, that he may be best remembered by his letters, for his range of literary achievement is much vaster and more memorable. But his letters, nevertheless, are his true memoir ; they exhibit his art at its finest, and have a delicacy and beauty of style often lacking in his larger efforts. To the mendacity of biographers who did not understand him, and the malice of a world of little men, curious to unveil his weaknesses, his spirit, if it still beholds the stage of Time, can afford to be indifferent ; for he has left his true memorial in his epistles and in these alone is the real man enshrined.

Charles Lamb has a place apart in the history of letter-writing. For forty years he was a tireless correspondent, his first published letter being addressed to Coleridge in 1796, and his last to Mrs. Dyer in 1834. In the four hundred and seventeen letters of Lamb which are included by Canon Ainger in his two volumes, we have every species of epistle ; the grave and the gay, the pathetic and the absurd ; letters that are the merest whimsies, letters that contain treasures of admirable thought and criticism, letters that touch upon the deepest and the saddest things of life. In all there is the same inimitable charm which we find in the *Essays of Elia*. If any fault can be found with these letters it is that they are too like the essays, and often are indeed the first drafts of the

essays. The Dissertation on Roast Pig appears first in a letter to Coleridge, and his account of Dyer was the matter of a letter before it was worked up into an essay. It is because the letter so often approximates to the essay that Lamb frequently fails in the highest attributes of the letter-writer. We have wit, fancy, imagination, but they are too conscious of themselves ; it is only in the really private letter, written in some hour of acute distress, that Lamb reveals himself with entire sincerity. Perhaps the best description of his letters, as a whole, would be Literary letters.

Edward FitzGerald and Stevenson represent the letter as a means of conversation. FitzGerald<sup>1</sup> gossips pleasantly about himself, his tastes, opinions, and surroundings, much as a man might do with a familiar friend. His are pre-eminently the letters of Friendship. He has retained the child-like nature, and is therefore joyous and tranquil. The impression which he makes is of an English meadow, starred with daffodils which shift and glitter in an Easter wind beside a slow midland river, which runs without sound to a sea whose mysterious heart-throb is heard at long intervals. The voice of FitzGerald has no piercing accent in it ; it is in 'tune with the soft tranquillity of nature ; but it soothes, and it releases the spirit in bondage to the world. One can understand how it was that Thackeray said that of all his friends, "Old Fitz" was the one he had loved the best. Perhaps also among all the letters of our age, these are those which men will love most ; and no finer tribute can be paid to them.

Stevenson's letters are also letters of conversation, but of a much gayer and more nimble quality. If

<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately the publisher refused permission for the use of any of FitzGerald's letters in the English edition of this work.

FitzGerald suggests the placid midland river, he suggests the rapid Highland stream, clear, loudly vocal, sparklingly vivacious, tossing up rainbows as it passes, shouting and singing in abandonment of mirth, yet also with its deep still pools in which eternal things hang reflected. He is too acute, too restless, too conscious of himself for more than brief intimacy ; a companion on the road rather than an intimate of the hearthstone. His mission is to stimulate ; we walk more cheerfully the moment we are of his company. He has a rare power of making ordinary things seem pleasant and original. He treats life as an adventure, and he makes us breathe the atmosphere of courage, expanse, and world-wideness in which he moves. And in all, the sense of personality is so strong that we lose the consciousness of any barrier of writing between ourselves and him ; it is rather the magic of real speech he casts upon us, as though he talked to us alone.

To these great names one more may be added which is relatively unknown, that of James Smetham.<sup>1</sup> Smetham was an artist with a true poetic sense, as those know who, like myself, have seen his pictures. He was the friend of Rossetti, who truly appreciated his work, but for various reasons Smetham was unable to make his 'art' popular. His life was therefore a long struggle against disappointment and poverty, and this failure of the outward life threw him back upon the inward. Happy indeed the man who has a "city of the mind" to which he can retire, as Smetham did, when the outward world offered no hospitality. There he found release and renewal, and his letters are the record of this inner life. They are full of fine thought, exquisitely expressed, with occasional passages of

<sup>1</sup> Permission for the printing of examples of Smetham's letters was refused by the publisher.

imagination which have all the charm of poetry ; they exhibit throughout a nature of rare gentleness, patience, and equipoise. They are in the first rank of Intellectual letters ; letters, that is, which express thought. This does not imply that he exceeds either Carlyle or Keats in intellect ; but merely that his life is more exclusively inward than theirs. He lives in the mind only ; and mind conquers for him his worldly failures, atones for them, and enables him to be triumphantly resigned. He is always sane and logical, never drunk with sensation as Keats is, never bitter as Carlyle is ; he has reached "the quiet seats above the thunder," from which he sees the world and its loud strife as something far below him and of no importance. Hence, even more than FitzGerald, he conveys the impression of serenity, but it is of a different quality ; FitzGerald is at home with the world, Smetham has conquered it.

That so much can be said of a man who is even yet almost unknown to discriminating readers suggests a final thought. We speak confidently of great letter-writers, but how can we be sure that there are not far greater whose work is unknown to us ? That a letter should be preserved at all argues not only something worthy or remarkable in it, but also some distinction in the writer, which gives prestige and value to his letter. But how often have the greatest men moved among their contemporaries unremarked, or at least unrecognized in the special rarity of their endowment ? What would we not give for a packet of the familiar letters of Shakespeare ? Such letters he must have written, but because none of his contemporaries knew the real measure of his genius, no one thought it worth while to preserve his epistles. Thus it may well happen that the greatest of all letter-writers have passed out of the world unrecognized, and have left no memorial. A thousand

letters, nay a thousand thousand, which have perhaps recorded the pathos and the tragedy of life more poignantly than *Hamlet* or *In Memoriam* have been read casually, put into a drawer, and forgotten, and finally cast into the fire upon some change of circumstance. It is merely by an accident that a thing so fugitive as a letter, committed as it is to the insecure custody of a single individual who may prove careless or inappreciative, survives at all ; but for the one accident that redeems it from oblivion, there are a hundred others that are only too likely to destroy it. For the epistolary art is very delicate and shy ; it is like the little arbutus flower, which comes to its perfection of purity and perfume beneath the snow and out of sight ; and it often withers and dies before any human eye has learned its worth.

So then, the finest letters of all may be those which have perished, or those kept in jealous privacy, or those which are too sacred for open knowledge. And the letters which the world knows and values may be after all but a scanty tithe from a rich field whose full harvest has long since been dispersed. This thought is sufficient to humble the pretensions of a categorical criticism, and to make the authoritative note impossible. The most that we dare to say is not that we have collected in one sheaf of excellence the best letters in English literature, but only the best we know ; and that while the student may discover better in certain hidden by-ways of biography, here, at least, are those which do faithfully represent those elements which sustain the claim that letter-writing is an art, and fine letter-writing one of the rarest arts of literature.

I

By-Gone Lovers

The pleasing transport. *Richard Steele* (1672-1729)

An old world courtship. *Lady Mary Montagu* (1689-1762)

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Learning to love. *Charlotte Brontë* (1816-1855)

Defending her union with Mr. George H. Lewes. *George Eliot* (1819-1880)

## THE PLEASING TRANSPORT

*Dick Steele to his Molly*

Smith Street, Westminster, 1707.

MADAM,—I lay down last night with your image in my thoughts, and have awak'd this morning in the same contemplation. The pleasing transport with which I'me delighted, has a sweetnesse in it attended with a train of ten thousand soft desires, anxieties, and cares ; the day arises on my hopes with new brightness ; youth, beauty and innocence are the charming objects that steal me from myself, and give me joys above the reach of ambition, pride or glory. Believe me, fair one, to throw myself at your feet is giving my self the highest blisse I know on Earth. Oh hasten ye minutes ! bring on the happy morning wherein to be ever her's will make me look down on thrones ! Dear Molly, I am tenderly, passionately, faithfully thine,

RICHARD STEELE.

## AN OLD WORLD COURTSHIP

*Lady Mary Montagu to Mr. Wortley Montagu, her husband to be.<sup>1</sup>*

### I

March 28, 1710.

Give me leave to say it (I know it sounds vain), I

<sup>1</sup> Lady Mary Wortley Montagu was the daughter of Evelyn Pierrepont, Esq., who afterwards became the Duke of Kings-

know how to make a man of sense happy ; but then that man must resolve to contribute something towards it himself. I have so much esteem for you, I should be very sorry to hear you was unhappy ; but for the world I would not be the instrument of making you so ; which (of the humour you are) is hardly to be avoided if I am your wife. You distrust me—I can neither be easy, nor loved, where I am distrusted. Nor do I believe your passion for me is what you pretend it ; at least I am sure was I in love I could not talk as you do. Few women would have spoken so plainly as I have done ; but to dissemble is among the things I never do. I take more pains to approve my conduct to myself than to the world ; and would not have to accuse myself of a minute's deceit. I wish I loved you enough to devote myself to be forever miserable, for the pleasure of a day or two's happiness. I cannot resolve upon it. You must think otherwise of me, or not at all.

I don't enjoin you to burn this letter. I know you will. 'Tis the first I ever writ to one of your sex, and

ton. Her brilliant mental parts first attracted the attention of her future husband when she was but fourteen years of age. He was very much her senior. A correspondence grew up between herself and Miss Anne Wortley, Mr. Wortley Montagu's sister, wherein she repeatedly asked for guidance in her studies, criticism and advice, answers to which questions it fell to the lot of the brother to dictate. After the death of Anne, the letters passed to Mr. Wortley Montagu direct. An affection sprang up, and matters were finally settled between the lovers ; all that remained was a request for the lady's father's consent. The Marquis of Dorchester, as he had now become, conditioned his approval with a form of settlement to which Mr. Wortley Montagu refused to agree. Matters were at a halt. In Lady Mary's twenty-fourth year, her father chose out for her another suitor with whom he insisted she should wed. She appealed to Mr. Wortley Montagu, who settled the difficulty by eloping in her company. They were married August, 1712.

shall be the last. You must never expect another. I resolve against all correspondence of the kind; my resolutions are seldom made, and never broken.

## II

[Postmark *April 25, 1710.*]

One part of my character is not so good, nor t'other so bad, as you fancy it. Should we ever live together, you would be disappointed both ways; you would find an easy equality of temper you do not expect, and a thousand faults you do not imagine. You think, if you married me, I should be passionately fond of you one month, and of somebody else the next: neither would happen. I can esteem, I can be a friend, but I don't know whether I can love. Expect all that is complaisant and easy, but never what is fond, in me. You judge very wrong of my heart, when you suppose me capable of views of interest, and that anything could oblige me to flatter any body. Was I the most indigent creature in the world, I should answer you as I do now, without adding or diminishing. I am incapable of art, and 'tis because I will not be capable of it. Could I deceive one minute, I should never regain my own good opinion; and who could bear to live with one they despised?

If you can resolve to live with a companion that will have all the deference due to your superiority of good sense, and that your proposals can be agreeable to those on whom I depend, I have nothing to say against them.

As to travelling, 'tis what I should do with great pleasure, and could easily quit London upon your account: but a retirement in the country is not so disagreeable to me, as I know a few months would

make it tiresome to you. Where people are tied for life, 'tis their mutual interest not to grow weary of one another. If I had all the personal charms that I want, a face is too slight a foundation for happiness. You would be soon tired with seeing every day the same thing. Where you saw nothing else, you would have leisure to remark all the defects ; which would increase in proportion as the novelty lessened, which is always a great charm. I should have the displeasure of seeing a coldness, which, though I could not reasonably blame you for, being involuntary, yet it would render me uneasy ; and the more, because I know a love may be revived which absence, inconstancy, or even infidelity, has extinguished ; but there is no returning from a *dégoût* given by satiety.

## III

[About November, 1710.]

Indeed I do not at all wonder that absence, and variety of new faces, should make you forget me ; but I am a little surprised at your curiosity to know what passes in my heart (a thing wholly insignificant to you), except you propose to yourself a piece of ill-natured satisfaction, in finding me very much disquieted. Pray which way would you see into my heart ? You can frame no guesses about it from either my speaking or writing ; and, supposing I should attempt to show it you, I know no other way.

I begin to be tired of my humility : I have carried my complaisances to you farther than I ought. You make new scruples ; you have a great deal of fancy ; and your distrusts being all of your own making, are more immovable than if there was some real ground for them. Our aunts and grandmothers always tell

us that men are a sort of animals, that, if they are constant, 'tis only where they are ill used. 'Twas a kind of paradox I could never believe: experience has taught me the truth of it. You are the first I ever had a correspondence with, and I thank God I have done with it for all my life. You needed not to have told me you are not what you have been: one must be stupid not to find a difference in your letters. You seem, in one part of your last, to excuse yourself from having done me any injury in point of fortune. Do I accuse you of any?

I have not spirits to dispute any longer with you. You say you are not yet determined; let me determine for you, and save you the trouble of writing again. Adieu for ever! make no answer. I wish, among the variety of acquaintance, you may find some one to please you; and can't help the vanity of thinking, should you try them all, you won't find one that will be so sincere in their treatment, though a thousand more deserving, and every one happier. 'Tis a piece of vanity and injustice I never forgive in a woman, to delight to give pain; what must I think of a man that takes pleasure in making me uneasy? After the folly of letting you know it is in your power, I ought in prudence to let this go no farther, except I thought you had good nature enough never to make use of that power. I have no reason to think so: however, I am willing, you see, to do you the highest obligation 'tis possible for me to do; that is, to give you a fair occasion of being rid of me.

## IV

Tuesday night [August, 1712].

If we marry, our happiness must consist in loving

G.E.L.—II.

one another: 'tis principally my concern to think of the most probable method of making that love eternal. You object against living in London; I am not fond of it myself, and readily give it up to you; though I am assured there needs more art to keep a fondness alive in solitude, where it generally preys upon itself. There is one article absolutely necessary—to be ever beloved, one must be ever agreeable. There is no such thing as being agreeable, without a thorough good humour, a natural sweetness of temper, enlivened by cheerfulness. Whatever natural fund of gaiety one is born with, 'tis necessary to be entertained with agreeable objects. Anybody, capable of tasting pleasure, when they confine themselves to one place, should take care 'tis the place in the world the most pleasing. Whatever you may now think (now, perhaps, you have some fondness for me), though your love should continue in its full force, there are hours when the most beloved mistress would be troublesome. People are not [for] ever (nor is it in human nature they should be) disposed to be fond; you would be glad to find in me the friend and the companion. To be agreeably this last, it is necessary to be gay and entertaining. A perpetual solitude, in a place where you see nothing to raise your spirits, at length wears them out, and conversation insensibly falls into dull and insipid. When I have no more to say to you, you will like me no longer. How dreadful is that view! You will reflect for my sake you have abandoned the conversation of a friend that you liked, and your situation in a country where all things would have contributed to make your life pass in (the true *volupté*) a smooth tranquillity. *I* shall lose the vivacity that should entertain you, and you will have nothing to recompense you for what you have

lost. Very few people that have settled entirely in the country, but have grown at length weary of one another. The lady's conversation generally falls into a thousand impertinent effects of idleness ; and the gentleman falls *in* love with his dogs and horses, and *out* of love with everything else. I am not now arguing in favour of the town ; you have answered me as to that point. In respect of your health, 'tis the first thing to be considered, and I shall never ask you to do anything injurious to that. But 'tis my opinion, 'tis necessary, to being happy, that we neither of us think any place more agreeable than that where we are.

## V

Friday night [15th Aug., 1712].

I tremble for what we are doing.—Are you sure you will love me for ever ? Shall we never repent ? I fear and I hope. I foresee all that will happen on this occasion. I shall incense my family in the highest degree. The generality of the world will blame my conduct, and the relations and friends of —— will invent a thousand stories of me ; yet, 'tis possible, you may recompense everything to me. In this letter, which I am fond of, you promise me all that I wish. Since I writ so far, I received your Friday letter. I will be only yours, and I will do what you please.

You shall hear from me again to-morrow, not to contradict, but to give some directions. My resolution is taken. Love me and use me well.

## A RUSTIC TRAGEDY

*Alexander Pope to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*

*September 1 [1717].*

I have a mind to fill the rest of this paper with an

accident that happened just under my eyes, and has made a great impression upon me. I have just passed part of this summer at an old romantic seat of Lord Harcourt's, which he lent me.<sup>1</sup> It overlooks a common field, where, under the shade of a haycock, sat two lovers, as constant as ever were found in romance, beneath a spreading beech. The name of the one—let it sound as it will—was John Hewett ; of the other, Sarah Drew. John was a well-set man about five-and-twenty ; Sarah, a brown woman of eighteen. John had for several months borne the labour of the day in the same field with Sarah ; when she milked it was his morning and evening charge to bring the cows to her pail. Their love was the talk, but not the scandal, of the whole neighbourhood ; for all they aimed at was the blameless possession of each other in marriage. It was but this very morning that he

<sup>1</sup> In 1737, Pope published, by subscription, a volume of letters between himself and his literary friends. Part of the collection had been previously issued by Curril, the notorious publisher of that day, to whom Pope had, by the agency of other parties, conveyed an edition privately printed. Having induced Curril to advertise the volume as containing letters of certain noblemen, the publisher was summoned before the House of Lords for breach of privilege. When it was examined, it was found to contain no single letter from any nobleman ; therefore Curril was dismissed. Pope now made this his excuse for putting forth a genuine collection, having by these means secured a magnificent advertisement and made certain of a large sale. In reality there was little difference between the two editions, Pope having prepared them both. Some of the letters therein contained certainly had no place in an actual correspondence ; many, perhaps most, of them had. The experiment of publishing letters was new to the public of Pope's day. Dr. Johnson says of it, “Pope's epistolary excellence had an open field ; he had no English rival, living or dead.” This, then, was the first English attempt to interest the public in the private and familiar friendships of literary men by way of their published letters.

had obtained her parents' consent, and it was but till the next week that they were to wait to be happy. Perhaps this very day, in the intervals of their work, they were talking of their wedding clothes ; and John was now matching several kinds of poppies and field-flowers to her complexion, to make her a present of knots for the day. While they were thus employed—it was on the last of July—a terrible storm of thunder and lightning arose, that drove the labourers to what shelter the trees or hedges afforded. Sarah, frightened and out of breath, sunk on a haycock, and John—who never separated from her—sat by her side, having raked two or three heaps together to secure her. Immediately there was heard so loud a crack as if heaven had burst asunder. The labourers, all solicitous for each other's safety, called to one another ; those that were nearest our lovers hearing no answer, stepped to the place where they lay ; they first saw a little smoke, and after, this faithful pair—John with one arm about his Sarah's neck, and the other held over her face, as if to screen her from the lightning. They were struck dead, and already grown stiff and cold in this tender posture. There was no mark or discolouring on their bodies, only that Sarah's eyebrow was a little singed, and a small spot between her breasts.

“ WHAT A DISHCLOUT OF A SOUL HAST THOU MADE  
OF ME ! ”

*Laurence Sterne to “Lady P.”*

Mount Coffee-house, *Tuesday, 3 o'clock.*

There is a strange mechanical effect produced in writing a billet-doux within a stone-cast of the lady who engrosses the heart and soul of an inamorato.

For this cause (but mostly because I am to dine in this neighbourhood) have I, Tristram Shandy, come forth from my lodgings to a coffee-house, the nearest I could find to my dear Lady —'s house, and have called for a sheet of gilt paper, to try the truth of this article of my creed. Now for it—

O my dear lady, what a dishclout of a soul hast thou made of me ! I think, by the bye, this is a little too familiar an introduction for so unfamiliar a situation —as I stand in with you—where, heaven knows, I am kept at a distance—and despair of getting one inch nearer you, with all the steps and windings I can think of to recommend myself to you. Would not any man in his senses run diametrically from you—and as far as his legs would carry him, rather than thus causelessly, foolishly, and foolhardily expose himself afresh—and afresh, where his heart and his reason tell him he shall be sure to come off loser, if not totally undone ? Why would you tell me you would be glad to see me ? Does it give you pleasure to make me more happy—or does it add to your triumph, that your eyes and lips have turned a man into a fool, whom the rest of the town is courting as a wit ? I am a fool—the weakest, the most ductile, the most tender fool, that ever woman tried the weakness of—and the most unsettled in my purposes and resolutions of recovering my right mind.—It is but an hour ago, that I kneeled down and swore I never would come near you—and after saying my Lord's Prayer for the sake of the close, *of not being led into temptation*—out I sallied like any Christian hero, ready to take the field against the world, the flesh and the devil ; not doubting that I should finally trample them all down under my feet ; and now I am got so near you—within this vile stone's cast of your house—I feel myself drawn into a vortex,

that has turned my brain upside downwards, and though I had purchased a box ticket to carry me to Miss —'s benefit, yet I know very well, that was a single line directed to me, to let me know Lady — would be alone at seven, and suffer me to spend the evening with her, she would infallibly see everything verified I have told her.—I dine at Mr. C——r's in Wigmore Street, in this neighbourhood, where I shall stay till seven in hopes you propose to put me to this proof. If I hear nothing by that time, I shall conclude that you are better disposed of—and shall take a sorry hack, and sorrily jog on to the play—curse on the word. I know nothing but sorrow—except this one thing, that I love you (perhaps foolishly, but)

most sincerely,

L. STERNE.

#### A LETTER WHICH WAS NEVER SENT

*Lord Byron to Lady Byron.<sup>1</sup>*

Pisa, November 17, 1821.

I have to acknowledge the receipt of “Ada’s hair” which is very soft and pretty, and nearly as dark already as mine was at twelve years old, if I may judge from what I recollect of some in Augusta’s possession, taken at that age. But it don’t curl,—perhaps from its being let grow.

I also thank you for the inscription of the date and name, and I will tell you why:—I believe that they are the only two or three words of your handwriting in my possession. For your letters I returned; and except the two words, or rather the one word, “House-

<sup>1</sup> Miss Milbanke became Lady Byron on the second of January, 1815. On January 15, 1816, she left Lord Byron never to return.

hold " written twice in an old account book, I have no other. I burnt your last note, for two reasons :—firstly, it was written in a style not very agreeable ; and, secondly, I wished to take your word without documents, which are the worldly resources of suspicious people.

I suppose that this note will reach you somewhere about Ada's birthday—the 10th of December, I believe. She will then be six, so that in about twelve more I shall have some chance of meeting her—perhaps sooner, if I am obliged to go to England by business or otherwise. Recollect however, one thing, either in distance or nearness ;—every day which keeps us asunder should, after so long a period, rather soften our mutual feelings, which must always have one rallying-point as long as our child exists, which I presume we both hope will be long after either of her parents.

The time which has elapsed since the separation has been considerably more than the whole brief period of our union, and the not much longer one of our prior acquaintance. We both made a bitter mistake ; but now it is over, and irrevocably so. For, at thirty-three on my part, and a few years less on yours, though it is no very extended period of life, still it is one when the habits and thought are generally so formed as to admit of no modification ; and as we could not agree when younger, we should with difficulty do so now.

I say all this, because I own to you, that, notwithstanding everything, I considered our re-union as not impossible for more than a year after the separation ;—but then I gave up the hope entirely and forever. But this very impossibility of re-union seems to me at least a reason why, on all the few points of discussion which can arise between us, we should preserve the courtesies of life, and as much of its kindness as

people who are never to meet may preserve perhaps more easily than nearer connexions. For my own part, I am violent, but not malignant ; for only fresh provocations can awaken my resentments. To you, who are colder and more concentrated, I would just hint that you may sometimes mistake the depth of a cold anger for dignity, and a worse feeling for duty. I assure you that I bear you *now* (whatever I may have done) no resentment whatever. Remember, that *if you have injured me in aught* this forgiveness is something ; and that, if I *have injured you*, it is something more still, if it be true, as the moralists say, that the most offending are the least forgiving.

Whether the offence has been solely on my side, or reciprocal, or on yours chiefly, I have ceased to reflect upon any but two things—viz., that you are the mother of my child, and that we shall never meet again. I think if you also consider the two corresponding points with reference to myself, it will be better for all three.

Yours ever,

NOEL BYRON.

### THE LOVE OF A POET

#### I

*John Keats to Fanny Brawne*

Wentworth Place, Hampstead, Middx.

Shanklin,

Isle of Wight, Thursday [1 July, 1819].

[*Postmark*, Newport, 3 July 1819.]

MY DEAREST LADY,

I am glad I had not an opportunity of sending off a Letter which I wrote for you on Tuesday night—'twas too much like one out of Ro[u]sseau's *Heloise*.

I am more reasonable this morning. The morning is the only proper time for me to write to a beautiful Girl whom I love so much ; for at night, when the lonely day has closed, and the lonely, silent, unmusical Chamber is waiting to receive me as into a Sepulchre, then believe me my passion gets entirely the sway, then I would not have you see those R[h]apsodies which I once thought it impossible I should ever give way to, and which I have often laughed at in another, for fear you should [think me] either too unhappy or perhaps a little mad. I am now at a very pleasant Cottage window, looking onto a beautiful hilly country, with a glimpse of the sea ; the morning is very fine. I do not know how elastic my spirit might be, what pleasure I might have in living here and breathing and wandering as free as a stag about this beautiful Coast if the remembrance of you did not weigh so upon me. I have never known any unalloy'd Happiness for many days together ; the death or sickness of some one has always spoilt my hours—and now when none such troubles oppress me, it is you must confess very hard that another sort of pain should haunt me. Ask yourself my love whether you are not very cruel to have so entrammelled me, so destroyed my freedom. Will you confess this in the Letter you must write immediately and do all you can to console me in it—make it rich as a draught of poppies to intoxicate me—write the softest words and kiss them that I may at least touch my lips where yours have been. For myself I know not how to express my devotion to so fair a form : I want a brighter word than bright, a fairer word than fair. I almost wish we were butterflies and liv'd but three summer days—three such days with you I could fill with more delight than fifty common years could ever contain. But however selfish

## JOHN KEATS

I may feel, I am sure I could never act selfish.  
I told you a day or two before I left Hampstead, I  
never return to London if my Fate does not turn  
Pam<sup>1</sup> or at least a Court-card. Though I could cent<sup>r</sup>.  
my happiness in you, I cannot expect to engross your  
heart so entirely—indeed if I thought you felt as  
much for me as I do for you at this moment I do not  
think I could restrain myself from seeing you again  
to-morrow for the delight of one embrace. But no—  
I must live upon hope and Chance. In case of the  
worst that can happen, I still shall love you—but  
what hatred shall I have for another! Some lines  
I read the other day are continually ringing a peal in  
my ears :

To see those eyes I prize above mine own  
Dart favours on another—  
And those sweet lips (yielding immortal nectar)  
Be gently press'd by any but myself—  
Think, think, Francesca, what a cursed thing  
It were beyond expression !

J.

Do write immediately. There is no Post from this  
Place, so you must address Post Office, Newport, Isle  
of Wight. I know before night I shall curse myself  
for having sent you so cold a letter ; yet it is better  
to do it as much in my senses as possible. Be as kind  
as the distance will permit to your

J. KEATS.

## BY-GONE LOVERS

### II

Wentworth Place, Hampstead, Middx.

*July 8th,*

[*Postmark, Newport, 10 July 1818.*]

MY SWEET GIRL,

Letter gave me more delight than anything in the world but yourself could do; indeed I am almost astonished that any absent one should have that luxurious power over my senses which I feel. Even when I am not thinking of you I receive your influence and a tenderer nature stealing upon me. All my thoughts, my unhappiest days and nights, have I find not at all cured me of my love of Beauty, but made it so intense that I am miserable that you are not with me; or rather breathe in that dull sort of patience that cannot be called Life. I never knew before, what such a love as you have made me feel, was; I did not believe in it; my Fancy was afraid of it, lest it should burn me up. But if you will fully love me, though there may be some fire, 'twill not be more than we can bear when moistened and bedewed with Pleasures. You mention "horrid people" and ask me whether it depend upon them whether I see you again. Do understand me, my love, in th' I have so much of you in my heart that I must turn Mentor when I see a chance of harm befalling you. I would never see any thing but Pleasure in your eyes, love on your lips, and Happiness in your steps. I would wish to see you among those amusements suitable to your inclinations and spirits; so that our loves might be a delight in the midst of Pleasures agreeable enough, rather than a resource from vexations and cares. But I doubt much, in case

of the worst, whether I shall be philosopher enough to follow my own Lessons : if I saw my resolution give you a pain I could not. Why may I not speak of your Beauty, since without that I could never have lov'd you ?

I cannot conceive any beginning of such love as I have for you but Beauty. There may be a sort of love for which, without the least sneer at it, I have the highest respect and can admire it in others ; but it has not the richness, the bloom, the full form, the enchantment of love after my own heart. So let me speak of your Beauty, though to my own endangering ; if you could be so cruel to me as to try elsewhere its Power. You say you are afraid I shall think you do not love me—in saying this you make me ache the more to be near you. I am at the diligent use of my faculties here, I do not pass a day without sprawling some blank verse or tagging some rhymes ; and here I must confess, that (since I am on that subject) I love you the more in that I believe you have liked me for my own sake and for nothing else. I have met with women whom I really think would like to be married to a Poem and to be given away by a Novel. I have seen your Comet, and only wish it was a sign that poor Rice would get well whose illness makes him rather a melancholy companion ; and the more so as to conquer his feelings and hide them from me, with a forc'd Pun. I kiss'd your writing over in the hope you had indulg'd me by leaving a trace of honey. What was your dream ? Tell it me and I will tell you the interpretation thereof.

Ever yours, my love !

JOHN KEATS.

Do not accuse me of delay—we have not here an

opportunity of sending letters every day. Write speedily.

## III

Wentworth Place, Hampstead, Middx.

Shanklin,

Thursday Evening

[15 July 1819 ?]

MY LOVE,

I have been in so irritable a state of health these two or three last days, that I did not think I should be able to write this week. Not that I was so ill, but so much so as only to be capable of an unhealthy teasing letter. To-night I am greatly recovered only to feel the languor I have felt after you touched with ardency. You say you perhaps might have made me better ; you would then have made me worse ; now you could quite effect a cure : What fee my sweet Physician would I not give you to do so. Do not call it folly, when I tell you I took your letter last night to bed with me. In the morning I found your name on the sealing wax obliterated. I was startled at the bad omen till I recollect that it must have happened in my dreams, and they you know fall out by contraries. You must have found out by this time I am a little given to bode ill like the raven ; it is my misfortune not my fault ; it has proceeded from the general tenor of the circumstances of my life, and rendered every event suspicious. However I will no more trouble either you or myself with sad Prophecies : though so far I am pleased at it as it has given me opportunity to love your disinterestedness towards me. I can be a raven no more ; you and pleasure take possession of me at the same moment. I am

afraid you have been unwell. If through me illness have touched you (but it must be with a very gentle hand) I must be selfish enough to feel a little glad at it. Will you forgive me this? I have been reading lately an oriental tale of a very beautiful color—It is of a city of melancholy men, all made so by this circumstance. Through a series of adventures each one of them by turns reach some gardens of Paradise where they meet with a most enchanting Lady ; and just as they are going to embrace her, she bids them shut their eyes—they shut them—and on opening their eyes again find themselves descending to the earth in a magic basket. The remembrance of this Lady and their delights lost beyond all recovery render them melancholy ever after. How I applied this to you, my dear ; how I palpitated at it ; how the certainty that you were in the same world with myself, and though as beautiful, not so talismanic as that Lady ; how I could not bear you should be so you must believe because I swear it by yourself. I cannot say when I shall get a volume ready. I have three or four stories half done, but as I cannot write for the mere sake of the press, I am obliged to let them progress or lie still as my fancy chooses. By Christmas perhaps they may appear, but I am not yet sure they ever will. 'Twill be no matter, for Poems are as common as newspapers and I do not see why it is a greater crime in me than in another to let the verses of an half-fledged brain tumble into the reading-rooms and drawing room windows. Rice has been better lately than usual ; he is not suffering from any neglect of his parents who have for some years been able to appreciate him better than they did in his first youth, and are now devoted to his comfort. To-morrow I shall, if my health continues to

improve during the night, take a look fa[r]ther about the country, and spy at the parties about here who come hunting after the picturesque like beagles. It is astonishing how they raven down scenery like children do sweetmeats. The wondrous Chine here is a very great Lion ; I wish I had as many guineas as there have been spy-glasses in it. I have been, I cannot tell why, in capital spirits this last hour. What reason ? When I have to take my candle and retire to a lonely room, without the thought as I fall asleep, of seeing you to-morrow morning ? or the next day, or the next—it takes on the appearance of impossibility and eternity—I will say a month—I will say I will see you in a month at most, though no one but yourself should see me ; if it be but for an hour. I should not like to be so near you as London without being continually with you ; after having once more kissed you Sweet I would rather be here alone at my task than in the bustle and hateful literary chitchat. Meantime you must write to me—as I will every week—for your letters keep me alive. My sweet Girl I cannot speak my love for you. Good night ! and

Ever yours  
JOHN KEATS.

## IV

Wentworth Place, Hampstead.

25 College Street.  
[Postmark, 13 October 1819.]

MY DEAREST GIRL,

This moment I have set myself to copy some verses out fair. I cannot proceed with any degree of content. I must write you a line or two and see if that will

assist in dismissing you from my Mind for ever so short a time. Upon my Soul I can think of nothing else. The time is passed when I had power to advise and warn you against the unpromising morning of my Life. My love has made me selfish. I cannot exist without you. I am forgetful of everything but seeing you again—my Life seems to stop there—I see no further. You have absorb'd me. I have a sensation at the present moment as though I was dissolving—I should be exquisitely miserable without the hope of soon seeing you. I should be afraid to separate myself far from you. My sweet Fanny, will your heart never change? My love, will it? I have no limit now to my love. . . . Your note came in just here. I cannot be happier away from you. 'Tis richer than an Argosy of Pearles. Do not threat me even in jest. I have been astonished that Men could die Martyrs for religion—I have shudder'd at it. I shudder no more—I could be martyr'd for my Religion—Love is my religion—I could die for that. I could die for you. My Creed is Love and you are its only tenet. You have ravish'd me away by a Power I cannot resist; and yet I could resist till I saw you; and even since I have seen you I have endeavoured often "to reason against the reasons of my Love." I can do that no more—the pain would be too great. My love is selfish. I cannot breathe without you.

Yours for ever

JOHN KEATS

V

[Wentworth Place,  
4 February 1820?]

DEAREST FANNY, I shall send this the moment you

G.E.L.—II.

return. They say I must remain confined to this room for some time. The consciousness that you love me will make a pleasant prison of the house next to yours. You must come and see me frequently: this evening, without fail—when you must not mind about my speaking in a low tone for I am ordered to do so though I *can* speak out.

Yours ever  
sweetest love.—

J. KEATS.

## VI

[Wentworth Place,  
February 1820 ?]

MY DEAR FANNY,

I think you had better not make any long stay with me when Mr. Brown is at home. Whenever he goes out you may bring your work. You will have a pleasant walk to-day. I shall see you pass. I shall follow you with my eyes over the Heath. Will you come towards evening instead of before dinner? When you are gone, 'tis past—if you do not come till the evening I have something to look forward to all day. Come round to my window for a moment when you have read this. Thank your Mother, for the preserves, for me. The raspberry will be too sweet not having any acid; therefore as you are so good a girl I shall make you a present of it. Good bye

My sweet Love!  
J. KEATS.

## VII

[Wentworth Place,

March 1820 ?]

SWEETEST FANNY,

You fear metimes, I do not love you so much  
as you w' My dear Girl I love you ever and ever  
and wit eserve. The more I have known you  
the mo 'e I lov'd. In every way—even my  
jealousi e been agonies of Love, in the hottest  
fit I eve I would have died for you. I have vex'd  
you too' i. But for Love ! Can I help it ? You  
are alw new. The last of your kisses was ever  
the swe ; the last smile the brightest ; the last  
moveme the gracefulest. When you pass'd my  
window me yesterday, I was fill'd with as much  
admir a as if I had then seen you for the first time.  
You ut ed a half complaint once that I only lov'd  
your Beauty. Have I nothing else then to love in  
you but that ? Do not I see a heart naturally furnish'd  
with wings imprison itself with me ? No ill prospect  
has been able to turn your thoughts a moment from  
me. This perhaps should be as much a subject of  
sorrow as joy—but I will not talk of that. Even if  
you did not love me I could not help an entire devotion  
to you : how much more deeply then must I feel for  
you knowing you love me. My Mind has been the  
most discontented and restless one that ever was  
put into a body too small for it. I never felt my  
Mind repose upon anything with complete and undis-  
tracted enjoyment—upon no person but you. When  
you are in the room my thoughts never fly out of  
window ; you always concentrate my whole senses.  
The anxiety shown about our Loves in your last note  
is an immense pleasure to me : however you must  
not suffer such speculations to molest you any more :

nor will I any more believe you can have the least pique against me. Brown is gone out—but here is Mrs. Wylie—when she is gone I shall be awake for you.—Remembrances to your Mother.

Your affectionate  
KEATS.

### ITS SEQUEL

#### I

*John Keats to Charles Armitage*

Wentworth Place, Hampstead

Saturday, Sept. 1820]

Maria Crowt  
Off Yarmouth, Isle ofight.

MY DEAR BROWN,

The time has not yet come for a pleasant letter from me. I have delayed writing to you from time to time, because I felt how impossible it was to enliven you with one heartening hope of my recovery ; this morning in bed the matter struck me in a different manner ; I thought I would write “ while I was in some liking,” or I might become too ill to write at all ; and then if the desire to have written should become strong it would be a great affliction to me. I have many more letters to write, and I bless my stars that I have begun, for time seems to press,—this may be my best opportunity. We are in a calm. I am easy enough this morning. If my spirits seem too low you may in some degree impute it to our having been at sea a fortnight without making any way. I was very disappointed at not meeting you at Bedhampton, and am very provoked at the thought

of you being at Chichester to-day.<sup>1</sup> I should have delighted in setting off for London for the sensation merely,—for what should I do there? I could not leave my lungs or stomach or other worse things behind me. I wish to write on subjects that will not agitate me much—there is one I must mention and have done with it. Even if my body would recover of itself, this would prevent it. The very thing which I want to live most for will be a great occasion of my death. I cannot help it. Who can help it? Were I in health it would make me ill, and how can I bear it in my state? I dare say you will be able to guess on what subject I am harping—you know what was my greatest pain during the first part of my illness at your house. I wish for death every day and night to deliver me from these pains, and then I wish death away, for death would destroy even those pains which are better than nothing. Land and sea, weakness and decline, are great separators, but death is the great divorcer for ever. When the pang of this thought has passed through my mind, I may say the bitterness of death is passed. I often wish for you that you might flatter me with the best. I think without my mentioning it for my sake you would be a friend to Miss Brawne when I am dead. You think she has many faults—but, for my sake, think she has not one. If there is anything you can do for her by word or deed I know you will do it. I am in a state at present in which woman merely as woman can have no more power over me than stocks and stones, and yet the difference of my sensations with

<sup>1</sup> Lord Houghton records that, "when Keats's ship was driven back into Portsmouth by stress of weather, Mr. Brown was staying in the neighbourhood within ten miles, when Keats landed and spent a day on shore."

respect to Miss Brawne and my sister is amazing. The one seems to absorb the other to a degree incredible. I seldom think of my brother and sister in America. The thought of leaving Miss Brawne is beyond everything horrible—the sense of darkness coming over me—I eternally see her figure eternally vanishing. Some of the phrases she was in the habit of using during my last nursing at Wentworth Place ring in my ears. Is there another life? Shall I awake and find all this a dream? There must be, we cannot be created for this sort of suffering. The receiving this letter is to be one of yours. I will say nothing about our friendship, or rather yours to me, more than that, as you deserve to escape, you will never be so unhappy as I am. I should think of—you in my last moments. I shall endeavour to write to Miss Brawne if possible to-day. A sudden stop to my life in the middle of one of these letters would be no bad thing, for it keeps one in a sort of fever awhile. Though fatigued with a letter longer than any I have written for a long while, it would be better to go on for ever than awake to a sense of contrary winds. We expect to put into Portland Roads to-night. The captain, the crew, and the passengers, are all ill-tempered and weary. I shall write to Dilke. I feel as if I was closing my last letter to you.

My dear Brown,

Your affectionate friend,

JOHN KEATS.

## II

*John Keats to Charles Armitage Brown*Naples,  
1 November [1820].

MY DEAR BROWN,

Yesterday we were let out of Quarantine, during which my health suffered more from bad air and the stifled cabin than it had done the whole voyage. The fresh air revived me a little, and I hope I am well enough this morning to write to you a short, calm letter ;—if that can be called one, in which I am afraid to speak of what I would fainest dwell upon. As I have gone thus far into it, I must go on a little ;—perhaps it may relieve the load of WRETCHEDNESS which presses upon me. The persuasion that I shall see her no more will kill me. I cannot q—<sup>1</sup> My dear Brown, I should have had her when I was in health, and I should have remained well. I can bear to die—I cannot bear to leave her. O God ! God ! God ! Everything I have in my trunks that reminds me of her goes through me like a spear. The silk lining she put in my travelling cap scalds my head. My imagination is horribly vivid about her—I see her—I hear her. There is nothing in the world of sufficient interest to divert me from her a moment. This was the case when I was in England ; I cannot recollect, without shuddering, the time that I was a prisoner at Hunt's and used to keep my eyes fixed on Hampstead all day. Then there was a good hope of seeing her again—Now !—O that I could be buried

<sup>1</sup> Brown makes the following note upon this passage :—

“ He could not go on with this sentence nor even write the word ‘quit,’—as I suppose. The word WRETCHEDNESS above, he himself wrote in large characters.”

near where she lives! I am afraid to write to her—to receive a letter from her—to see her handwriting would break my heart—even to hear of her anyhow, to see her name written, would be more than I can bear. My dear Brown, what am I to do? Where can I look for consolation or ease? If I had any chance of recovery, this passion would kill me. Indeed, through the whole of my illness, both at your house and at Kentish Town, this fever has never ceased wearing me out. When you write to me, which you will do immediately, write to Rome (*poste restante*)—if she is well and happy, put a mark thus+ ; if—

Remember me to all. I will endeavour to bear my miseries patiently. A person in my state of health should not have such miseries to bear. Write a short note to my sister, saying you have heard from me. Severn is very well. If I were in better health I would urge your coming to Rome. I fear there is no one can give me any comfort. Is there any news of George? O, that something fortunate had ever happened to me or my brothers!—then I might hope,—but despair is forced upon me as a habit. My dear Brown, for my sake, be her advocate for ever. I cannot say a word about Naples; I do not feel at all concerned in the thousand novelties around me. I am afraid to write to her—I should like her to know that I do not forget her. Oh, Brown, I have coals of fire in my breast. It surprises me that the human heart is capable of containing and bearing so much misery. Was I born for this end? God bless her, and her mother, and my sister, and George, and his wife, and you, and all!

Your ever affectionate friend,

JOHN KEATS.

*Thursday [2 November 1820].—I was a day too early*

for the Courier. He sets out now. I have been more calm to-day, though in a half dread of not continuing so. I said nothing of my health; I know nothing of it; you will hear Severn's account, from [Haslam]. I must leave off. You bring my thoughts too near to Fanny. God bless you!

## III

*John Keats to Armitage Brown<sup>1</sup>*

Rome, November 30, 1820.

MY DEAR BROWN,

'Tis the most difficult thing in the world to me to write a letter. My stomach continues so bad, that I feel it worse on opening any book,—yet I am much better than I was in quarantine. Then I am afraid to encounter the pro-ing and con-ing of anything interesting to me in England. I have an habitual feeling of my real life having passed, and that I am leading a posthumous existence. God knows how it would have been—but it appears to me—however, I will not speak of that subject. I must have been at Bedhampton nearly at the time you were writing to me from Chichester—how unfortunate—and to pass on the river too! There was my star predominant! I cannot answer anything in your letter, which followed me from Naples to Rome, because I am afraid to look it over again. I am so weak (in mind) that I cannot bear the sight of any handwriting of a friend I love so much as I do you. Yet I ride the little horse, and, at my worst, even in quarantine, summoned up more puns, in a sort of desperation, in one week than in any year of my life. There is one thought enough to kill me; I have been well, healthy,

<sup>1</sup> This is believed to be the last letter that he wrote.

alert, etc., walking with her, and now—the knowledge of contrast, feeling for light and shade, all that information (primitive sense) necessary for a poem, are great enemies to the recovery of the stomach. There, you rogue, I put you to the torture ; but you must bring your philosophy to bear, as I do mine, really, or how should I be able to live ? Dr. Clark is very attentive to me ; he says there is very little the matter with my lungs, but my stomach, he says, is very bad. I am well disappointed in hearing good news from George,<sup>1</sup> for it runs in my head we shall all die young. I have not written to Reynolds yet, which he must think very neglectful ; being anxious to send him a good account of my health, I have delayed it from week to week. If I recover, I will do all in my power to correct the mistakes made during sickness ; and if I should not, all my faults will be forgiven. Severn is very well, though he leads so dull a life with me. Remember me to all friends, and tell Haslam I should not have left London without taking leave of him, but from being so low in body and mind. Write to George as soon as you receive this, and tell him how I am, as far as you can guess ; and also a note to my sister —who walks about my imagination like a ghost—she is so like Tom.<sup>2</sup> I can scarcely bid you good-bye, even in a letter. I always made an awkward bow.

God bless you !

JOHN KEATS.

<sup>1</sup> George Keats lived until 1842, meantime making and losing a couple of fortunes. His sister, Frances Mary, or Fanny, became Mrs. Llanos and lived to be eighty-six, dying in 1889.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Keats, his youngest brother, who had died of consumption, Dec. 1, 1818.

## IV

*Joseph Severn to Mrs. Brawne*

Rome, Dec. 14th, 1820.

MY DEAR MADAM,

I fear poor Keats is at his worst. A most unlooked-for relapse has confined him to his bed, with every chance against him. It has been so sudden upon what I thought convalescence, and without any seeming cause, that I cannot calculate on the next change. I dread it, for his suffering is so great, so continued, and his fortitude so completely gone, that any further change must make him delirious. This is the fifth day, and I see him get worse.

*December 17th, 4 a.m.*—Not a moment can I be from him. I sit by his bed and read all day, and at night I humour him in all his wanderings. He has just fallen asleep, the first sleep for eight nights, and now from mere exhaustion. I hope he will not wake till I have written, for I am anxious that you should know the truth; yet I dare not let him see I think his state dangerous. On the morning of this attack he was going on in good spirits quite merrily, when, in an instant, a cough seized him, and he vomited two cupfuls of blood. In a moment I got Dr. Clark, who took eight ounces of blood from his arm—it was black and thick. Keats was much alarmed and dejected. What a sorrowful day I had with him! He rushed out of bed and said, “This day shall be my last;” and but for me most certainly it would. The blood broke forth in similar quantity the next morning, and he was bled again. I was afterwards so fortunate as to talk him into a little calmness, and he soon became quite patient. Now the blood has come

up in coughing five times. Not a single thing will he digest, yet he keeps on craving for food. Every day he raves he will die of hunger, and I've been obliged to give him more than he was allowed. His imagination and memory present every thought to him in horror ; the recollection of "his good friend Brown," of "his four happy weeks spent under *her* care," of his sister and brother. Oh ! he will mourn over all to me whilst I cool his burning forehead, till I tremble for his intellect. How can he be "Keats" again after all this ? Yet I may see it too gloomily, since each coming night I sit up adds its dismal contents to my mind.

Dr. Clark will not say much ; although there are no bounds to his attention, yet he can with little success "administer to a mind diseased." All that can be done he does most kindly, while his lady, like himself in refined feeling, prepares all that poor Keats takes, for in this wilderness of a place, for an invalid, there was no alternative. Yesterday Dr. Clark went all over Rome for a certain kind of fish, and just as I received it, carefully dressed, Keats was taken with spitting of blood.

We have the best opinion of Dr. Clark's skill ; he comes over four or five times a day, and he has left word for us to call him up, at any moment, in case of danger. My spirits have been quite pulled down. Those wretched Romans have no idea of comfort. I am obliged to do everything for him. I wish you were here.

I have just looked at him. This will be good-night.

to exist. O ! I would my unfortunate friend had never left your Wentworth Place—for the hopeless advantages of this comfortless Italy. He has many, many times talked over “ the few happy days at your house, the only time when his mind was at ease.” I hope still to see him with you again. Farewell, my dear madam. One more thing I must say—poor Keats cannot see any letters, at least he will not—they affect him so much and increase his danger. The two last I repented giving, he made me put them into his box—unread ; more of these when I write again, meanwhile any matter of moment had better come to me. I will be very happy to receive advice and remembrance from you. Once more farewell.

Your obedient and affectionate servant,  
JOSEPH SEVERN.

3 o'clock morning.

P.S. I have just looked at him—he is in a beautiful sleep ; in look he is very much more like himself—I have the greatest [hope] of him——

## VII

*Joseph Severn to Mrs. Brawne*

*Rome,  
12th February, 1821.*

MY DEAR MRS. BRAWNE,—

I have just received your letter of the 15th—the contrast of your quiet friendly Hampstead with this lonely place and our poor suffering Keats brings the tears into my eyes. I wish many, many times that he had never left you. His recovery must have been impossible whilst he was in England, and his excessive

grief since has made it more so. In your care he seems to me like an infant in its mother's arms—you would have smoothed down his pain by varieties, his death might have been eased by the sight of his many friends. But here, with one solitary friend, in a place else savage for an invalid he has had one more pang added to his many, for I have had the hardest task in keeping from him my painful situation. He had refused all food, but I tried him every way—I left him no excuse. Many times I have prepared his meals six times over, and kept from him the trouble I had in doing it. I have not been able to leave him; that is, I have not dared to, but when he slept. Had he come here alone he would have plunged into the grave in secret—we should never have known one syllable about him. This reflection alone repays me for all I have done. It is impossible to conceive what the sufferings of this poor fellow have been. Now he is still alive and calm. If I say more I shall say too much. Yet at times I have hoped he would recover, but the Doctor shook his head, and Keats would not hear that he was better—the thought of recovery is beyond everything dreadful to him. We now dare not perceive any improvement, for the hope of death seems his only comfort. He talks of the quiet grave as the first rest he can ever have: I can believe and feel this most truly. In the last week a great desire for books came across his mind. I got him all the books at hand and for three days this charm lasted on him, but now it is gone. Yet he is very calm—he is more and more reconciled to his fortunes.

*Feb. 14th.*—Little or no change has taken place in Keats since the commencement of this, except this beautiful one that his mind is growing to great

quietness and peace—I find this change has its rise from the increasing weakness of his body, but it seems like a delightful sleep to me. I have been beating about in the tempest of his mind so long. To-night he has talked very much to me, but so easily that he at last fell into a pleasant sleep—he seems to have comfortable dreams without nightmare. This will bring on some change—it cannot be worse, it may be better. Among the many things he has requested of me to-night, this is the principal, that on his grave shall be this—

“Here lies one whose name was writ in water.”

You will understand this so well I will not say a word about it, but is it not dreadful that he should with all his misfortunes on his mind and perhaps wrought up to their abisme, end his life without one jot of human happiness? When he first came here he purchased a copy of Alfieri, but put it down at the second page—“Misera me!” He was much affected at this passage.

“Misera me! Sollevo a me non resta  
Altro ch’ i pianto, ed il pianto è delitto.”

## VIII

*Joseph Severn to Charles Armitage Brown*

*February, 1821.*

Poor Keats has just fallen asleep. I have watched him and read to him to his very last wink; he had been saying to me, “Severn, I can see under your quiet look immense contention—you don’t know what you are reading. You are enduring for me more than I would have you. O! that my last hour was come!” He is sinking daily; perhaps

another three weeks may lose him to me for ever. I was sure of his recovery when we set out. I was selfish, I thought of his value to me ; I made my own public success to depend on his candour to me. Torlonia, the banker, has refused us any more money ; the bill is returned unaccepted, and to-morrow I must pay my last crown for this cursed lodging-place ; and, what is more, if he dies all the beds and furniture will be burnt and the walls scraped, and they will come on me for a hundred pounds or more. But, above all, this noble fellow lying on the bed and without the common spiritual comforts that many a rogue and fool has in his last moments ; if I do break down it will be under this ; but I pray that some angel of goodness may yet lead him through this dark wilderness. If I could leave Keats every day for a time I could soon raise money by my painting, but he will not let me out of his sight, he will not bear the face of a stranger. I would rather cut my tongue out than tell him I must get the money—that would kill him at a word. You see my hopes of being kept by the Royal Academy will be cut off unless I send a picture by the spring. I have written to Sir T. Lawrence. I have got a volume of Jeremy Taylor's works, which Keats has heard me read to-night. This is a treasure indeed, and came when I should have thought it hopeless. Why may not other good things come ? I will keep myself up with such hopes. Dr. Clark is still the same, though he knows about the bill ; he is afraid the next change will be to diarrhoea. Keats sees all this—his knowledge of anatomy makes every change tenfold worse ; every way he is unfortunate, yet every one offers me assistance on his account. He cannot read any letters, he has made me put them by him unopened.

They tear him to pieces—he dare not look on the outside any more ; make this known.

## IX

*Joseph Severn to William Haslam*

Feb. 22nd, 1821.

MY DEAR HASLAM,—

O, how anxious I am to hear from you ! I have nothing to break this dreadful solitude but letters. Day after day, night after night, here I am by our poor dying friend. My spirits, my intellect, and my health are breaking down. All run away, and even if they did not, Keats would not do without me. Last night I thought he was going, I could hear the phlegm in his throat ; he bade me lift him up on the bed or he would die with pain. I watched him all night, expecting him to be suffocated at every cough. This morning, by the pale daylight, the change in him frightened me ; he has sunk in the last three days to a most ghastly look. Though Dr. Clark has prepared me for the worst, I shall be ill able to bear to be set free even from this, my horrible situation, by the loss of him. I am still quite precluded from painting, which may be of consequence to me. Poor Keats has me ever by him, and shadows out the form of one solitary friend ; he opens his eyes in great doubt and horror, but when they fall upon me they close gently, open quietly and close again, till he sinks to sleep. This thought alone would keep me by him till he dies ; and why did I say I was losing my time ? The advantages I have gained by knowing John Keats are double and treble any I could have won by any other occupation. Farewell.

## X

*Joseph Severn to Charles Armitage Brown*  
February (?), 1821.

MY DEAR BROWN,

He is gone. He died with the most perfect ease. He seemed to go to sleep. On the 23rd, Friday, at half-past four, the approach of death came on. "Severn—I—lift me up, for I am dying. I shall die easy. Don't be frightened! Thank God it has come." I lifted him up in my arms, and the phlegm seemed boiling in his throat. This increased until eleven at night, when he gradually sank into death, so quiet that I still thought he slept—but I cannot say more now. I am broken down beyond my strength. I cannot be left alone. I have not slept for nine days, I will say the days since \_\_\_\_\_. On Saturday a gentleman came to cast the face, hand, and foot. On Sunday his body was opened; the lungs were completely gone, the doctors could not conceive how he had lived in the last two months. Dr. Clark will write you on this head. . . .

## THE AFTERMATH

## I

THE LETTER WHICH CAME TOO LATE<sup>1</sup>

*Leigh Hunt to Joseph Severn*

Vale of Health, Hampstead, March 8, 1821.

DEAR SEVERN,—

You have concluded, of course, that I have sent no letters to Rome, because I was aware of the effect they would have on Keats's mind; and this is the principal

<sup>1</sup> Keats died in Rome on February 23, 1821. He was lying in his grave when Leigh Hunt penned this letter.

cause,—for besides what I have been told of his emotions about letters in Italy, I remember his telling me on one occasion that, in his sick moments, he never wished to receive another letter, or even to see another face however friendly. But I still should have written to you had I not been almost at death's door myself. You will imagine how ill I have been when you hear that I have just begun writing for the *Examiner* and *Indicator*, after an interval of several months, during which my flesh wasted from me in sickness and melancholy. Judge how often I thought of Keats. and with what feelings. Mr. Brown tells me he is comparatively calm now, or rather quite so. If he can bear to hear of us, pray tell him—but he knows it all already, and can put it in better language than any man. I hear he does not like to be told that he may get better ; nor is it to be wondered at, considering his firm persuasion that he shall not recover. He can only regard it as a puerile thing, and an insinuation that he cannot bear to think he shall die. But if this persuasion should happen no longer to be so strong upon him, or if he can now put up with such attempts to console him, remind him of what I have said a thousand times, and that I still (upon my honour, Severn) think always, that I have seen too many instances of recovery from apparently desperate cases of consumption, not to indulge in hope to the very last. If he cannot bear this, tell him—tell that great poet and noble-hearted man—that we shall all bear his memory in the most precious part of our hearts, and that the world shall bow their heads to it, as our loves do. Or if this again will trouble his spirit, tell him we shall never cease to remember and love him, and that the most sceptical of us have faith enough in the high things that nature put into our heads to think that all who are of one accord in mind and heart are journeying to one

and the same place, and shall unite somehow or other again, face to face, mutually conscious, mutually delighted. Tell him he is only before us on the road, as he was in everything else ; or, whether you tell him the latter or no, tell him the former, and add that we shall never forget he was so, and that we are coming after him. The tears are again in my eyes, and I must not afford to shed them. The next letter I write shall be more to yourself, and a little more refreshing to your spirits, which we are very sensible must have been greatly taxed. But whether our friend dies or not, it will not be among the least lofty of our recollections by-and-by, that you helped to smooth the sick-bed of so fine a being.

God bless you, dear Severn,

Your sincere friend,

LEIGH HUNT.

## II

### THE FIRST COPY OF THE "ADONAI'S"

*P. B. Shelley to Joseph Severn*

Pisa, November 29, 1821.

DEAR SIR,—

I send you the elegy of poor Keats—and I wish it were better worth your acceptance. You will see, by the preface, that it was written before I could obtain any particular account of his last moments ; all that I still know was communicated to me by a friend who had derived his information from Colonel Finch ; I have ventured to express, as I felt, the respect and admiration which *your* conduct towards him demands.

In spite of his transcendent genius, Keats never was, nor ever will be, a popular poet ; and the total neglect

and obscurity in which the astonishing remnants of his mind still lie was hardly to be dissipated by a writer, who, however he may differ from Keats in more important qualities, at least resembles him in that accidental one, a want of popularity.

I have little hope, therefore, that the poem I send you will excite any attention, nor do I feel assured that a critical notice of his writings would find a single reader. But for these considerations, it had been my intention to have collected the remnants of his compositions, and to have published them with a Life and Criticism. Has he left any poems or writings of whatsoever kind, and in whose possession are they? Perhaps you would oblige me by information on this point.

Many thanks for the picture you promised me: I shall consider it among the most sacred relics of the past. For my part, I little expected, when I last saw Keats at my friend Leigh Hunt's, that I should survive him.<sup>1</sup>

Should you ever pass through Pisa, I hope to have the pleasure of seeing you, and of cultivating an acquaintance into something pleasant, begun under such melancholy auspices.

Accept, my dear sir, the assurance of my highest esteem, and believe me,

Your most sincere and faithful servant,  
PERCY B. SHELLEY.

<sup>1</sup> When, seven and a half months after the writing of this letter, Shelley's body was washed up on the beach of Viarreggio, there was found in his coat pocket a copy of Keats' last volume, *Lamia, Isabella, The Eve of St. Agnes, and Other Poems*, published 1820. Before setting sail he had visited Pisa in the company of Leigh Hunt who, at his departure, had given to him this book to read on the voyage, saying, "Keep it until you can give it back to me with your own hand." The page was turned down at *The Eve of St. Agnes* as if, in mid act of reading, some danger of the sea had threatened and the book had been thrust hastily away.

## MAZZINI IS BELOVED BY A JEWISH LADY

*Jane Welsh Carlyle to Thomas Carlyle*

Chelsea, Thursday, September 18, 1845.

MY DEAR, . . . I have got quite over the fatigues of my journey, which had been most provokingly aggravated for me by a circumstance " which it may be interesting not to state " ; the last two nights I have slept quite as well as I was doing at Seaforth. The retirement of Cheyne Row is as deep at present as any one not absolutely a Timon of Athens could desire. " There is, in the first place " (as Mr. Paulet would say), the physical impossibility (hardly anybody being left in town), and then the weather has been so tempestuous that nobody in his senses (except Mazzini, who never reflects whether it be raining or no) would come out to make visits. He (Mazzini) came the day before yesterday, immediately on receiving notification of my advent, and his doe-skin boots were oozing out water in a manner frightful to behold. He looked much as I left him, and appeared to have made no progress of a practical sort. He told me nothing worth recording, except that he had received the other day a declaration of love. And this he told with the same *calma* and historical precision with which you might have said you had received an invitation to take the chair at a Mechanics' Institute dinner. Of course I asked " the particulars. " " Why not ? " and I got them fully, at the same time with brevity, and without a smile. Since the assassination affair, he had received many invitations to the house of a Jew merchant of Italian extraction, where there are several daughters—" what shall I say ? —horribly ugly : that is, repugnant for me entirely. " One of them is " nevertheless very strong in music, " and seeing that he

admired her playing, she had "in her head confounded the playing with the player."

The last of the only two times he had availed himself of their attentions, as they sat at supper with Browning and some others, "the youngest of the horrible family" proposed to him, in *sotto voce*, that they two should drink "a goblet of wine" together, each to the person that each loved most in the world.

"I find your toast *unegoist*," said he, "and I accept it with pleasure." "But," said she, "when we have drunk, we will then tell each other to whom?" "Excuse me," said he, "we will, if you please, drink without conditions." Whereupon they drank; "and then this girl—what shall I say? bold, upon my honour—proposed to tell me to whom she had drunk, and trust to my telling her after. 'As you like.' 'Well, then, it was to you!' 'Really?' said I, surprised I must confess. 'Yes,' said she, pointing aloft, 'true as God exists.' 'Well,' said I, 'I find it strange.' 'Now, then,' said she, 'to whom did you drink?' 'Ah!' said I, that is another question; and on this, that girl became ghastly pale, so that her sister called out, 'Nina! what is the matter with you?' and now, thank God, she has sailed to Aberdeen." Did you ever hear anything so distracted? enough to make one ask if R—— has not some grounds for his extraordinary ideas of English women.

#### DECEIVED IN HER BIRTHDAY LETTER

*Jane Welsh Carlyle to Thomas Carlyle*

Seaforth House, *Tuesday, July 14, 1846.*

Oh, my dear husband, Fortune has played me such a cruel trick to-day! But it is all right now; and I do not even feel any resentment against Fortune for

the suffocating misery of the last two hours. I know always, even when I seem to you most exacting, that whatever happens to me is nothing like so bad as I deserve. But you shall hear all how it was.

Yesterday, in coming back from the post-office, where I had gone myself with the letter to you, my head took to aching, and ached, ached on all day in a bearable sort of fashion, till the evening, when Geraldine came over from Manchester, and the sudden bound my heart gave at the sight of her finished me off on the spot. I had to get myself put to bed, and made a bad wakeful night of it ; so that this morning I was nervous, as you may figure, and despairing of all things, even of the letter from you that I expected so confidently yesterday. Encouragement came, however, from a quarter I was little dreaming of—*before* the post time, before I was dressed, in fact—Heaven knows how she had managed it—there was delivered to me a packet from—Bölte, at Cambridge—a pretty little collar and cuffs of the poor thing's own work with the kindest letter, after all my cruelty to her ! Well, I thought, if *she* can be so loving and forgiving for me, I need not be tormenting myself with the fear that *he* will not write to-day either, and I put on the collar there and then, and went down to breakfast in a little better heart.

At ten, the post hour, I slipped away myself to the post office, but was *detected* by Betsy and Geraldine, who insisted on putting on their bonnets and accompanying me. I could well have dispensed with the attention ; however, I trusted there would be a letter, and their presence would only hinder me reading it for a little. And *two* were handed out which I stretched out *my* hand to receive. Both for Betsy ! None for *me*, the postmistress averred !

Not a line from you on my birthday—on the fifth day ! I did not burst out crying—did not faint—did not *do* anything absurd, so far as I know ; but I walked back again without speaking a word, and with such a tumult of wretchedness in my heart as you, who know me, can conceive. And then I shut myself in my room to fancy everything that was most tormenting. Were you finally so out of patience with me that you had resolved to write me no more at all ? Had you gone to Addiscombe and found no leisure there to remember my existence ? Were you taken ill, so ill that you *could* not write ? That last idea made me mad to get off to the railway and back to London. Oh, mercy ! what a two hours I had of it ! And just when I was at my wits' end, I heard Julia crying out through the house, “ Mrs. Carlyle, Mrs. Carlyle ! are you there ? Here is a letter for you ! ” And so there was, after all. The postmistress had overlooked it, and given it to Robert when he went afterwards, not knowing that we had been. I wonder what *love letter* was ever received with such thankfulness ! Oh, my dear, I am not fit for living in the world with this organisation. I am as much broken to pieces by that little accident as if I had come through an attack of cholera or typhus fever. I cannot even steady my hand to *write* decently. But I felt an irresistible need of thanking you by return of post. Yes, I have kissed the dear little card-case. And now I will lie down a while and try to get some sleep, at least to quiet myself. I will try to believe—oh, why cannot I believe it once for all—that with all my faults and follies, I *am* “ dearer to you than any earthly creature ! ” I will be better for Geraldine here ; she is become very quiet and nice, and as affectionate for me as ever.

Your own

JANE CARLYLE.

## BY-GONE LOVERS

### LEARNING TO LOVE

*Charlotte Brontë to Ellen Nussey* <sup>1</sup>

#### I

*December 15th, 1852.*

I inclose another note which, taken in conjunction with the incident immediately preceding it, and with a long series of indications whose meaning I scarce ventured hitherto to interpret to myself, much less hint to any other, has left on my mind a feeling of deep concern. This note you will see is from Mr. Nicholls.<sup>2</sup>

I know not whether you have ever observed him specially when staying here. Your perception is generally quick enough—*too* quick, I have sometimes thought; yet as you never said anything, I restrained my own dim misgivings, which could not claim the sure guide of vision. What papa has seen or guessed I will not inquire, though I may conjecture. He has minutely noticed all Mr. Nicholls's low spirits, all his threats of expatriation, all his symptoms of impaired health—noticed them with little sympathy and much

<sup>1</sup> Charlotte Brontë's most intimate friend.

<sup>2</sup> The Rev. Arthur Bell Nicholls was born in County Antrim, in 1817, of parents who were Scotch on both sides. His first curacy was Haworth, of which Charlotte Brontë's father was incumbent; hither he came in 1844. He is the Mr. Macarthey of *Shirley*. His was the fourth proposal of marriage which Charlotte Brontë received. Her first was from Henry Nussey, 1839. Her second from Mr. Price, 1839. Her third from James Taylor, the second in command to Mr. W. S. Williams as adviser to the firm of Smith Elder, 1851. After much difficulty the proposal of Mr. Nicholls was accepted, and the marriage took place June 29, 1854. March 31, 1855, Charlotte Brontë died. Mr. Nicholls remained at Haworth for the six years following his wife's death. On the death of Mr. Brontë (1777–1861), Charlotte Brontë's father, he returned to Ireland and, some years later married again—a cousin, by name Miss Bell.

indirect sarcasm. On Monday evening Mr. Nicholls was here to tea. I vaguely felt without clearly seeing, as without seeing I have felt for some time, the meaning of his constant looks, and strange, feverish restraint. After tea I withdrew to the dining-room as usual. As usual, Mr. Nicholls sat with papa till between eight and nine o'clock. I then heard him open the parlour door as if going. I expected the clash of the front door. He stopped in the passage ; he tapped ; like lightning it flashed on me what was coming. He entered ; he stood before me. What his words were you can guess ; his manner you can hardly realise, nor can I forget it. Shaking from head to foot, looking deadly pale, speaking low, vehemently, yet with difficulty, he made me for the first time feel what it costs a man to declare affection where he doubts response. The spectacle of one ordinarily so statue-like thus trembling, stirred, and overcome, gave me a kind of strange shock. He spoke of sufferings he had borne for months, of sufferings he could endure no longer, and craved leave for some hope. I could only entreat him to leave me then and promise a reply on the morrow. I asked him if he had spoken to papa. He said he dared not. I think I half led, half put him out of the room. When he was gone I immediately went to papa, and told him what had taken place. Agitation and anger disproportionate to the occasion ensued ; if I had *loved* Mr. Nicholls, and had heard such epithets applied to him as were used, it would have transported me past my patience ; as it was, my blood boiled with a sense of injustice. But papa worked himself into a state not to be trifled with : the veins on his temples started up like whip-cord, and his eyes became suddenly bloodshot. I made haste to promise that Mr. Nicholls should on the morrow have a distinct refusal.

I wrote yesterday and got this note. There is no need to add to this statement any comment. Papa's vehement antipathy to the bare thought of any one thinking of me as a wife, and Mr. Nicholls's distress, both give me pain. Attachment to Mr. Nicholls you are aware I never entertained, but the poignant pity inspired by his state on Monday evening, by the hurried revelation of his sufferings for many months, is something galling and irksome. That he cared something for me, and wanted me to care for him, I have long suspected, but I did not know the degree or strength of his feelings. Dear Nell, good-bye.—Yours faithfully,

C. BRONTE.

## II

*April 6th, 1853.*

You ask about Mr. Nicholls. I hear he has got a curacy, but do not know yet where. I trust the news is true. He and papa never speak. He seems to pass a desolate life. He has allowed late circumstances so to act on him as to freeze up his manner and overcast his countenance not only to those immediately concerned but to every one. He sits drearily in his rooms. If Mr. Grant or any other clergyman calls to see, and as they think, to cheer him, he scarcely speaks. I find he tells them nothing, seeks no confidant, rebuffs all attempts to penetrate his mind. I own I respect him for this. He still lets Flossy go to his rooms, and takes him to walk. He still goes over to see Mr. Sowden sometimes, and, poor fellow, that is all. He looks ill and miserable. I think and trust in Heaven that he will be better as soon as he fairly gets away from Haworth. I pity him inexpressibly. We never meet nor speak, nor dare I look at him; silent pity is

just all that I can give him, and as he knows nothing about that, it does not comfort.

## III

*May 27th, 1853.*

As to the last Sunday, it was a cruel struggle. Mr. Nicholls ought not to have had to take any duty.

He left Haworth this morning at six o'clock. Yesterday evening he called to render into papa's hands the deeds of the National School, and to say good-bye. They were busy cleaning—washing the paint, etc., in the dining-room, so he did not find me there. I would not go into the parlour to speak to him in papa's presence. He went out, thinking he was not to see me; and indeed, till the very last moment, I thought it best not. But perceiving that he stayed long before going out at the gate, and remembering his long grief, I took courage and went out, trembling and miserable. I found him leaning against the garden door in a paroxysm of anguish, sobbing as women never sob. Of course I went straight to him. Very few words were interchanged, those few barely articulate. Several things I should have liked to ask him were swept entirely from my memory. Poor fellow! But he wanted such hope and such encouragement as I could not give him. Still, I trust he must know now that I am not cruelly blind and indifferent to his constancy and grief. For a few weeks he goes to the south of England, afterwards he takes a curacy somewhere in Yorkshire, but I don't know where.

Papa has been far from strong lately. I dare not mention Mr. Nicholls's name to him. He speaks of him quietly and without opprobrium to others, but to me he is implacable on the matter. However, he is gone

—gone, and there's an end of it. I see no chance of hearing a word about him in future, unless some stray shred of intelligence comes through Mr. Sowden or some other second-hand source. In all this it is not I who am to be pitied at all, and of course nobody pities me. They all think in Haworth that I have disdainfully refused him. If pity would do Mr. Nicholls any good, he ought to have, and I believe has it. They may abuse me if they will; whether they do or not I can't tell.

## IV

Haworth, *April 11th, 1854.*

Mr. Nicholls came on Monday, and was here all last week. Matters have progressed thus since July. He renewed his visit in September, but then matters so fell out that I saw little of him. He continued to write. The correspondence pressed on my mind. I grew very miserable in keeping it from papa. At last sheer pain made me gather courage to break it. I told all. It was very hard and rough work at the time, but the issue after a few days was that I obtained leave to continue the communication. Mr. Nicholls came in January; he was ten days in the neighbourhood. I saw much of him. I had stipulated with papa for opportunity to become better acquainted. I had it, and all I learnt inclined me to esteem and affection. Still papa was very, very hostile, bitterly unjust.

I told Mr. Nicholls the great obstacle that lay in his way. He has persevered. The result of this, his last visit, is, that papa's consent is gained, that his respect, I believe, is won, for Mr. Nicholls has in all things proved himself disinterested and forbearing. Certainly, I must respect him, nor can I withhold from him

more than mere cool respect. In fact, dear Ellen, I am engaged.

Mr. Nicholls, in the course of a few months, will return to the curacy of Haworth. I stipulated that I would not leave papa ; and to papa himself I proposed a plan of residence which should maintain his seclusion and convenience uninvaded, and in a pecuniary sense bring him gain instead of loss. What seemed at one time impossible is now arranged, and papa begins really to take a pleasure in the prospect.

For myself, dear Ellen, while thankful to One who seems to have guided me through much difficulty, much and deep distress and perplexity of mind, I am still very calm, very inexpectant. What I taste of happiness is of the soberest order. I trust to love my husband. I am grateful for his tender love to me. I believe him to be an affectionate, a conscientious, a high-principled man ; and if, with all this, I should yield to regrets that fine talents, congenial tastes and thoughts are not added, it seems to me I should be most presumptuous and thankless.

Providence offers me this destiny. Doubtless, then, it is the best for me. Nor do I shrink from wishing those dear to me one not less happy.

It is possible that our marriage may take place in the course of the summer. Mr. Nicholls wishes it to be in July. He spoke of you with great kindness, and said he hoped you would be at our wedding. I said I thought of having no other bridesmaid. Did I say rightly ? I mean the marriage to be literally as quiet as possible.

Do not mention these things just yet. I mean to write to Miss Wooler shortly. Good-bye. There is a strange half-sad feeling in making these announcements. The whole thing is something other than imag-

ination paints it beforehand ; cares, fears, come mixed inextricably with hopes. I trust yet to talk the matter over with you. Often last week I wished for your presence and said so to Mr. Nicholls—Arthur, as I now call him, but he said it was the only time and place when he could not have wished to see you. Good-bye.  
—Yours affectionately,

C. BRONTË.

V

*August 9th, 1854.*

Since I came home I have not had an unemployed moment. My life is changed indeed : to be wanted continually, to be constantly called for and occupied seems so strange ; yet it is a marvellously good thing. As yet I don't quite understand how some wives grow so selfish. As far as my experience of matrimony goes, I think it tends to draw you out of, and away from yourself. . . .

Dear Nell, during the last six weeks, the colour of my thoughts is a good deal changed : I know more of the realities of life than I once did. I think many false ideas are propagated, perhaps unintentionally. I think those married women who indiscriminately urge their acquaintance to marry, much to blame. For my part, I can only say with deeper sincerity and fuller significance what I always said in theory, “Wait God's will.” Indeed, indeed, Nell, it is a solemn and strange and perilous thing for a woman to become a wife. Man's lot is far, far different. Tell me when you think you can come. Papa is better, but not well. How is your mother ? give my love to her.—Yours faithfully,

C. B. NICHOLLS.

## DEFENDING HER UNION WITH MR. GEORGE H. LEWES

*George Eliot to Mrs. Bray**September 4, 1855.*

If there is any one action or relation of my life which is, and always has been, profoundly serious, it is my relation to Mr. Lewes. It is, however, natural enough that you should mistake me in many ways, for not only are you unacquainted with Mr. Lewes' real character and the course of his actions, but also it is several years now since you and I were much together, and it is possible that the modifications my mind has undergone may be quite in the opposite direction of what you imagine. No one can be better aware than yourself that it is possible for two people to hold different opinions on momentous subjects with equal sincerity, and an equally earnest conviction that their respective opinions are alone the truly moral ones. If we differ on the subject of the marriage laws, I at least, can believe of you that you cleave to what you believe to be good ; and I don't know of anything in the nature of your views that should prevent you from believing the same of me. *How far* we differ, I think we neither of us know, for I am ignorant of your precise views ; and apparently you attribute to me both feelings and opinions which are not mine. We cannot set each other quite right in this matter in letters, but one thing I can tell you in a few words. Light and easily-broken ties are what I neither desire theoretically, nor could live for practically. Women who are satisfied with such ties do *not* act as I have done. That any unworldly, unsuperstitious person, who is sufficiently acquainted with the realities of life can pronounce my relation to Mr. Lewes immoral, I can only understand by remembering how subtle and complex

are the influences that mould opinion. But I do remember this : and I indulge in no arrogant or uncharitable thoughts about those who condemn us, even though we might have expected a somewhat different verdict. From the majority of persons, of course, we never looked for anything but condemnation. We are leading no life of self-indulgence, except indeed, that, being happy in each other, we find everything easy. We are working hard to provide for others better than we provide for ourselves, and to fulfil every responsibility that lies upon us. Levity and pride would not be a sufficient basis for that. Pardon me if in vindicating myself from some unjust conclusions, I seem too cold and self-asserting. I should not care to vindicate myself if I did not love you, and desire to relieve you of the pain which you say these conclusions have given you. Whatever I may have misinterpreted before, I do not misinterpret your letter this morning, but read in it nothing else than love and kindness towards me, to which my heart fully answers yes. I should like never to write about myself again ; it is not healthy to dwell on one's own feelings and conduct, but only to try and live more faithfully and lovingly every fresh day. I think not one of the endless words and deeds of kindness and forbearance you have ever shown me has vanished from my memory. I recall them often, and feel, as about everything else in the past, how deficient I have been in almost every relation of my life. But that deficiency is irrevocable, and I can find no strength or comfort, except in "pressing forward towards the things that are before," and trying to make the present better than the past. But if we should never be very near each other again, dear Cara, do bear this faith in your mind, that I was not insensible or ungrateful to all your goodness, and that I am one

amongst the many for whom you have not lived in vain. I am very busy just now, and have been obliged to write hastily. Bear this in mind, and believe that no meaning is mine which contradicts my assurance that I am your affectionate and earnest friend.



# II

## Landscapes

Dutch landscape with figures in the foreground.  
*Oliver Goldsmith (1728-1774)*

A curious place.  
*Robert Southey (1774-1843)*

The Coliseum.  
*Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822)*

Ascending Vesuvius.  
*Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822)*

Dome beyond dome, palaces and colonnades.  
*Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822)*

" Good God, my dear fellow, have we lived to see this ! "  
*Charles Dickens (1812-1870)*

In Luther's country.  
*Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881)*

Two mighty continents of cloud.  
*Frederick W. Robertson (1816-1853)*

## DUTCH LANDSCAPE WITH FIGURES IN THE FOREGROUND

*Oliver Goldsmith to his Uncle Contarine*

Leyden [1754].

DEAR SIR,—I suppose by this time I am accused of either neglect or ingratitude, and my silence imputed to my usual slowness of writing. But believe me, Sir, when I say, that till now I had not an opportunity of sitting down with that ease of mind which writing required. You may see by the top of the letter that I am at Leyden ; but of my journey hither you must be informed. Some time after the receipt of your last, I embarked for Bordeaux, on board a Scotch ship called the *St. Andrews*, Capt. John Wall, master. The ship made a tolerable appearance, and as another inducement, I was let to know that six agreeable passengers were to be my company. Well, we were but two days at sea when a storm drove us into a city of England called Newcastle-on-Tyne. We all went ashore to refresh us after the fatigue of our voyage. Seven men and I were one day on shore and on the following evening as we were all very merry, the room door bursts open : enters a sergeant and twelve grenadiers with their bayonets screwed and puts all under king's arrest. It seems my company were Scotchmen in the French service, and had been in Scotland to list soldiers for the French army. I endeavou<sup>r</sup> if I could to prove my inno-

## LANDSCAPES

cence ; however, I remained in prison with the rest a fortnight, and with difficulty got off even then. Dear Sir, keep this all a secret, or at least say it was for debt ; for if it were once known at the University, I should hardly get a degree. But hear how Providence interposed in my favour ; the ship was gone on to Bordeaux before I got from prison, and was wrecked at the mouth of the Garonne, and every one of the crew were drowned. It happened the last great storm. There was a ship at that time ready for Holland. I embarked, and in nine days, thank my God, I arrived safe at Rotterdam ; whence I travelled by land to Leyden ; and whence I now write.

You may expect some account of this country, and though I am not well qualified for such an undertaking, yet shall I endeavour to satisfy some part of your expectations. Nothing surprises me more than the books every day published, descriptive of the manners of this country. Any young man who takes it into his head to publish his travels, visits the countries he intends to describe ; passes through them with as much inattention as his *valet de chambre* ; and consequently not having a fund himself to fill a volume, he applies to those who wrote before him, and gives us the manners of a country, not as he must have seen them, but such as they might have been fifty years before. The modern Dutchman is quite a different creature from him of former times ; he in everything imitates a Frenchman, but in his easy disengaged air, which is the result of keeping polite company. The Dutchman is vastly ceremonious, and is perhaps exactly what a Frenchman might have been in the reign of Louis XIV. Such are the better bred. But the downright Hollander is of the oddest figures in nature. Upon a head of la sir he wears a half-

cocked narrow hat laced with black ribbon : no coat, but seven waistcoats, and nine pairs of breeches ; so that his hips reach almost up to his arm-pits. This well-clothed vegetable is now fit to see company, or make love. But what a pleasing creature is the object of his appetite ? Why, she wears a large fur cap with a deal of Flanders lace : for every pair of breeches he carries, she puts on two petticoats.

A Dutch lady burns nothing about her phlegmatic admirer but his tobacco. You must know, Sir, every woman carries in her hand a stove with cones in it, which, when she sits, she snugs under her petticoats ; and at this chimney dozing Strephon lights his pipe.

Like as that this continual smoking is what gives the man the ruddy healthful complexion, by drawing his superfluous moisture, while the woman, deprived of this amusement, overflows with such viscidities as tint the complexion, and give that paleness of visage which low fenny grounds and moist air conspire to cause. A Dutch woman and Scotch will well bear an opposition.

The one pale and fat, the other lean and ruddy : the one walks as if she were straddling after a go-cart, and the other takes too masculine a stride. I shall not endeavour to deprive either country of its share of beauty ; but must say, that of all objects on earth, an English farmer's daughter is most charming. Every woman there is a complete beauty, while the higher class of women want many of the requisites to make them even tolerable. Their pleasures here are very dull, though very various. You may smoke, you may doze ; you may go to the Italian Comedy, as good an amusement as either of the former. This entertainment always brings in Harlequin, who is generally a magician and in consequence of his dia-

## LANDSCAPES

bolical art performs a thousand tricks on the credulity of the persons of the Drama, who are all fools.' I have seen the pit in a roar of laughter at this humour, when with his sword he touches the glass from which another was drinking. It was not his face they laughed at, for that was masked. They must have seen something vastly queer in the wooden sword, that neither I, nor you, Sir, were you there, could see.

In winter, when their canals are frozen, every house is forsaken, and all people are on the ice ; sleds drawn by horses, and skating, are at that time the reigning amusements.

They have boats here that slide on the ice, and are driven by the winds. When they spread all their sails they go more than a mile and a half a minute, and their motion is so rapid the eye can hardly accompany them. Their ordinary manner of travelling is very cheap and very convenient ; they sail in covered boats drawn by horses ; and in these you are sure to meet people of all nations. Here the Dutch slumber, the French chatter, and the English play at cards. Any man who likes company may have them to his taste. For my part I generally detached myself from all society, and was wholly taken up in observing the face of the country. Nothing can equal its beauty ; wherever I turn my eye, fine houses, elegant gardens, statues, grottos, vistas, presented themselves ; but when you enter their towns you are charmed beyond description.. No misery is to be seen here ; every one is usefully employed.

Scotland and this country bear the highest contrast. There hills and rocks intercept every prospect : here 'tis all continued plain. There you might see a well dressed duchess issuing from a dirty close ; and here a dirty Dutchman inhabiting a palace. The Scotch

## ROBERT SOUTHEY

may be compared to a tulip planted in dung ; but I never see a Dutchman in his house but I think of a magnificent Egyptian temple dedicated to an ox. Physic is by no means taught here so well as in Edinburgh ; and in all Leyden there are but four British students, owing to all necessaries being so extremely dear, and the professors so very lazy (the chemical professor excepted,) that we don't much care to come hither. I am not certain how long my stay here may be ; however I expect to have the happiness of seeing you at Kilmore, if I can, next March.

Direct to me, if I am honoured with a letter from you, to Madame Diallions at Leyden.

Thou best of men, may Heaven guard and preserve you, and those you love.

OLIVER GOLDSMITH.

### A CURIOUS PLACE

*Robert Southey to Joseph Cottle*

Lisbon, February 1, 1796.

The city is a curious place ; a straggling plan ; built on the most uneven ground, with heaps of ruins in the middle and large open places. The streets filthy beyond all English ideas of filth, for they throw everything into the streets, and nothing is removed. Dead animals annoy you at every corner ; and such is the indolence and nastiness of the Portug ~~use~~, that I verily believe they would let each other rot, in the same manner, if the priests did not get something by burying them. Some of the friars are avowed to wear their clothes without changing for a year ; and this is a comfort to them : you will not wonder, therefore, that I always keep to the windward of these reverend perfumers.

The streets are very agreeable in wet weather. If you walk under the houses, you are drenched by the

## LANDSCAPES

water-spouts. If you attempt the middle, there is a river. If you would go between both, there is the dunghill. The rains here are very violent, and the streams in the streets, on a declivity, so rapid as to throw down men ; and sometimes to overset carriages. A woman was drowned some years ago in one of the most frequented streets of Lisbon.

To-night I shall see the procession of “ Our Lord of the Passion.” This image is a very celebrated one, and with great reason, for one night he knocked at the door of St. Roque’s church, and there they would not admit him. After this he walked to the other end of the town, to the church of St. Grace, and there they took him in ; but a dispute now arose between the two churches, to which the image belonged ; whether to the church which he first chose, or the church that first chose him. The matter was compromised. One church has him, and the other fetches him for their processions, and he sleeps with the latter the night preceding. The better mode for deciding it had been to take the gentleman between both, and let him walk to which he liked best. What think you of this story being believed in 1796 !!!

The power of the Inquisition still exists, though they never exercise it, and thus the Jews save their bacon. Fifty years ago it was the greatest delight of the Portuguese to see a Jew burnt. Geddes, the then chaplain, was present at one of these detestable Autos da Fé. He says, “ The transports expressed by all ages, and all sexes, whilst the miserable sufferers were shrieking and begging mercy for God’s sake, formed a scene more horrible than any out of hell ! ” He adds, that “ this barbarity is not their national character, for no people sympathize so much at the execution of a criminal ; but it is the damnable nature of their

religion, and the most diabolical spirit of their priests their celibacy deprives them of the affections of men, and their creed gives them the ferocity of devils." Geddes saw one man gagged, because immediately he came out of the Inquisition gates, he looked up at the sun, whose light for many years had never visited him, and exclaimed, " How is it possible for men who behold that glorious orb, to worship any being but him who created it ! " My blood runs cold when I pass that accursed building ; and though they do not exercise their power, it is a reproach to human nature that the building should exist.

It is as warm here as in May with you ; of course we broil in that month at Lisbon ; but I shall escape the hot weather here, as I did the cold weather of England, and quit this place the latter end of April. You will, of course, see me the third day after my landing at Falmouth, or, if I can get companions in a post-chaise, sooner. This my resolution is like the law of the Medes and Persians, that altereth not. Be so good as to procure for me a set of Coleridge's *Watchman*, with his Lectures and Poems. I want to write a Tragedy here, but can find no leisure to begin with.

Portugal is much plagued with robbers, and they generally strip a man, and leave him to walk home in his birthday suit. An Englishman was served thus at Almeyda, and the Lisbon magistrates, on his complaint, took up the whole village, and imprisoned them all. Contemplate this people in what light you will, you can never see them in a good one. They suffered their best epic Poet to perish for want ; and they burned to death their best dramatic writer, because he was a Jew.

Yours,  
ROBERT SOUTHEY.

## THE COLISEUM

*Percy Bysshe Shelley to T. L. Peacock*

Naples, December 22, 1818.

Since I last wrote to you, I have seen the ruins of Rome, the Vatican, St. Peter's, and all the miracles of ancient and modern art contained in that majestic city. The impression of it exceeds anything I have ever experienced in my travels. We stayed there only a week, intending to return at the end of February, and devote two or three months to its mines of inexhaustible contemplation, to which period I refer you for a minute account of it. We visited the Forum and the ruins of the Coliseum every day. The Coliseum is unlike any work of human hands I ever saw before. It is of enormous height and circuit, and the arches built of massy stones are piled on one another, and jut into the blue air, shattered into the forms of overhanging rocks. It has been changed by time into the image of an amphitheatre of rocky hills overgrown by the wild olive, the myrtle, and the fig-tree, and threaded by little paths, which wind among its ruined stairs and immeasurable galleries: the copsewood overshadows you as you wander through its labyrinths, and the wild weeds of this climate of flowers bloom under your feet. The arena is covered with grass, and pierces, like the skirts of a natural plain, the chasms of the broken arches around. But a small part of the exterior circumference remains—it is exquisitely light and beautiful; and the effect of the perfection of its architecture, adorned with ranges of Corinthian pilasters, supporting a bold cornice, is such as to diminish the effect of its greatness. The interior is all ruin. I can scarcely believe that even

when encrusted with Dorian marble and ornamented by columns of Egyptian granite, its effect could have been so sublime and so impressive as in its present state. It is open to the sky, and it was the clear and sunny weather of the end of November in this climate when we visited it, day after day.

Near it is the arch of Constantine, or rather the arch of Trajan ; for the servile and avaricious senate of degraded Rome ordered that the monument of his predecessor should be demolished in order to dedicate one to the Christian reptile, who had crept among the blood of his murdered family to the supreme power. It is exquisitely beautiful and perfect. The Forum is a plain in the midst of Rome, a kind of desert full of heaps of stones and pits ; and though so near the habitations of men, is the most desolate place you can conceive. The ruins of temples stand in and around it, shattered columns and ranges of others complete, supporting cornices of exquisite workmanship, and vast vaults of shattered domes distinct with regular compartments, once filled with sculptures of ivory or brass. The temples of Jupiter, and Concord, and Peace, and the Sun, and the Moon, and Vesta, are all within a short distance of this spot. Behold the wrecks of what a great nation once dedicated to the abstractions of the mind ! Rome is a city, as it were, of the dead, or rather of those who cannot die, and who survive the puny generations which inhabit and pass over the spot which they have made sacred to eternity. In Rome, at least in the first enthusiasm of your recognition of ancient time, you see nothing of the Italians. The nature of the city assists the delusion, for its vast and antique walls describe a circumference of sixteen miles, and thus the population is thinly scattered over this space,

nearly as great as London. Wide wild fields are enclosed within it, and there are grassy lanes and coves winding among the ruins, and a great green hill, lonely and bare, which overhangs the Tiber. The gardens of the modern palaces are like wild woods of cedar, and cypress, and pine, and the neglected walks are overgrown with weeds. The English burying-place is a green slope near the walls, under the pyramidal tomb of Cestius, and is, I think, the most beautiful and solemn cemetery I ever beheld. To see the sun shining on its bright grass, fresh, when we first visited it, with the autumnal dews, and hear the whispering of the wind among the leaves of the trees which have overgrown the tomb of Cestius, and the soil which is stirring in the sun-warm earth, and to mark the tombs, mostly of women and young people who were buried there, one might, if one were to die, desire the sleep they seem to sleep. Such is the human mind, and so it peoples with its wishes vacancy and oblivion.

#### ASCENDING VESUVIUS

*Percy Bysshe Shelley to T. L. Peacock*

*(Same Letter)*

Vesuvius is, after the Glaciers, the most impressive exhibition of the energies of nature I ever saw. It has not the immeasurable greatness, the overpowering magnificence, nor, above all, the radiant beauty of the glaciers ; but it has all their character of tremendous and irresistible strength. From Resina to the hermitage you wind up the mountain, and cross a vast stream of hardened lava, which is an actual image of the waves of the sea, changed into hard black stone by enchantment. The lines of the boiling flood seem

to hang in the air, and it is difficult to believe that the billows which seem hurrying down upon you are not actually in motion. This plain was once a sea of liquid fire. From the hermitage we crossed another vast stream of lava, and then went on foot up the cone—this is the only part of the ascent in which there is any difficulty, and that difficulty has been much exaggerated. It is composed of rocks of lava, and declivities of ashes ; by ascending the former and descending the latter, there is very little fatigue. On the summit is a kind of irregular plain, the most horrible chaos that can be imagined ; riven into ghastly chasms, and heaped up with tumuli of great stones and cinders, and enormous rocks blackened and calcined, which had been thrown from the volcano upon one another in terrible confusion. In the midst stands the conical hill from which volumes of smoke, and the fountains of liquid fire, are rolled forth forever. The mountain is at present in a slight state of eruption ; and a thick heavy white smoke is perpetually rolled out, interrupted by enormous columns of an impenetrable black, bituminous vapour, which is hurled up, fold after fold, into the sky with a deep hollow sound, and fiery stones are rained down from its darkness, and a black shower of ashes fell even where we sat. The lava, like the glacier, creeps on perpetually, with a crackling sound as of suppressed fire. There are several springs of lava ; and in one place it rushes precipitously over a high crag, rolling down the half-molten rocks and its own overhanging waves ; a cataract of quivering fire. We approached the extremity of one of the rivers of lava ; it is about twenty feet in breadth and ten in height ; and as the inclined plane was not rapid, its motion was very slow. We saw the masses of its dark exterior surface detach

themselves as it moved, and betray the depth of the liquid flame. In the day the fire is but slightly seen ; you only observe a tremulous motion in the air, and streams and fountains of white sulphurous smoke.

At length we saw the sun sink, between Capreae and Inarime, and, as the darkness increased, the effect of the fire became more beautiful. We were, as it were, surrounded by streams and cataracts of the red and radiant fire ; and in the midst, from the column of bituminous smoke shot up into the air, fell the vast masses of rock, white with the light of their intense heat, leaving behind them through the dark vapour trains of splendour. We descended by torch-light, and I should have enjoyed the scenery on my return, but they conducted me, I know not how, to the hermitage in a state of intense bodily suffering, the worst effect of which was spoiling the pleasure of Mary and C—. Our guides on the occasion were complete savages. You have no idea of the horrible cries which they suddenly utter, no one knows why ; the clamour, the vociferation, the tumult. C— in her palanquin suffered most from it ; and when I had gone on before, they threatened to leave her in the middle of the road, which they would have done had not my Italian servant promised them a beating, after which they became quiet. Nothing, however, can be more picturesque than the gestures and the physiognomies of these savage people. And when, in the darkness of night, they unexpectedly begin to sing in chorus some fragments of their wild but sweet national music, the effect is exceedingly fine.

## DOME BEYOND DOME, PALACES AND COLONNADES

*Percy Bysshe Shelley to T. L. Peacock*Rome, *March 23, 1819.*

I walk forth in the purple and golden light of an Italian evening, and return by star or moonlight, through this scene. The elms are just budding, and the warm spring winds bring unknown odours, all sweet from the country. I see the radiant Orion through the mighty columns of the temple of Concord, and the mellow fading light softens down the modern buildings of the Capitol, the only ones that interfere with the sublime desolation of the scene. On the steps of the Capitol itself, stand two colossal statues of Castor and Pollux, each with his horse, finely executed, though far inferior to those of Monte Cavallo, the cast of one of which you know we saw together in London. This walk is close to our lodging, and this is my evening walk.

What shall I say of the modern city? Rome is yet the capital of the world. It is a city of palaces and temples, more glorious than those which any other city contains, and of ruins more glorious than they. Seen from any of the eminences that surround it, it exhibits domes beyond domes, and palaces, and colonnades interminably, even to the horizon; interspersed with patches of desert, and mighty ruins which stand girt by their own desolation, in the midst of the fanes of living religions and the habitations of living men, in sublime loneliness. St. Peter's is, as you have heard, the loftiest building in Europe. Externally it is inferior in architectural beauty to St. Paul's, though not wholly devoid of it; internally it exhibits littleness on a large scale, and is in every respect opposed to antique taste. You know my

propensity to admire ; and I tried to persuade myself out of this opinion—in vain ; the more I see of the interior of St. Peter's, the less impression as a whole does it produce on me. I cannot even think it lofty, though its dome is considerably higher than any hill within fifty miles of London ; and when one reflects, it is an astonishing monument of the daring energy of man. Its colonnade is wonderfully fine, and there are two fountains, which rise in spire-like columns of water to an immense height in the sky, and falling on the porphyry vases from which they spring, fill the whole air with a radiant mist, which at noon is thronged with innumerable rainbows. In the midst stands an obelisk. In front is the palace-like façade of St. Peter's, certainly magnificent ; and there is produced, on the whole, an architectural combination unequalled in the world. But the dome of the temple is concealed, except at a very great distance, by the façade and the inferior part of the building, and that diabolical contrivance they call an attic.

“ GOOD GOD, MY DEAR FELLOW, HAVE WE LIVED TO  
SEE THIS ! ”

*Charles Dickens to John Forster*

*Tuesday night, 12th November, 1844.*

I must not anticipate myself. But, my dear fellow, nothing in the world that ever you have heard of Venice, is equal to the magnificent and stupendous reality. The wildest visions of the Arabian Nights are nothing to the piazza of Saint Mark, and the first impression of the inside of the Church. The gorgeous and wonderful reality of Venice is beyond the fancy of the wildest dreamer. Opium couldn't build such

a place, and enchantment couldn't shadow it forth in a vision. All that I have heard of it, read of it in truth or fiction, fancied of it, is left thousands of miles behind. You know that I am liable to be disappointed in such things through over-expectation, but Venice is above, beyond, out of all reach coming of near, the imagination of a man. It has never been rated high enough. It is a thing you would shed tears to see. When I came *on board* here last night (after a five miles' row in a gondola ; which, somehow or other, I wasn't at all prepared for) ; then, from seeing the city lying, one night, upon the distant water, like a ship, I came plashing through the silent and deserted streets ; I felt as if the houses were reality—the water, fever madness. But when, in the bright cold bracing day, I stood upon the piazza this morning, by Heaven the glory of the place was insupportable ! And diving down from that into its wickedness and gloom—its awful prisons deep below the water ; its judgment chambers, secret doors, deadly nooks, where the torches you carry with you blink as if they couldn't bear the air in which the frightful scenes were acted ; and coming out again into the radiant, unsubstantial Magic of the town ; and diving in again, into vas' churches, and old tombs—a new sensation, a n memory, a new mind came upon me. Venice bit of my brain from this time. My dear F<sup>r</sup> if you could share my transports (as you woul' were here) what would I not give. . . . I r the thing before that I should be afraid t But to tell what Venice is, I feel to be an ir And here I sit alone, writing it : with nc me on, or goad me to that estimate, v of it to any one I loved, and being spc' would lead me to form. In the sol

famous inn ; with the great bell of Saint Mark ringing twelve at my elbow ; with three arched windows in my room (two stories high) looking down upon the grand canal and away, beyond, to where the sun went down to-night in a blaze ; and thinking over again those silent speaking faces of Titian and Tintoretto ; I swear (uncooled by any humbug I have seen) that Venice is the wonder and the new sensation of the world ! If you could be set down in it, never having heard of it, it would still be so. With your foot upon its stones, its pictures before you, and its history in your mind, it is something past all writing of or speaking of—almost past all thinking of. You couldn't talk to me in this room, nor I to you, without shaking hands and saying "Good God, my dear fellow, have we lived to see this ! "

#### IN LUTHER'S COUNTRY

*Thomas Carlyle to Margaret Carlyle* <sup>1</sup>

Weimar, Sept. 19, 1852.

The Landgraf's high old castle, where we loitered a couple of hours, is now a correction-house filled with criminals and soldiers. The chamber of conference 'between Luther, Zwingli, etc., is used for keeping hay.

The next morning brought us from Cassel to Eisenach. Its Wartburg, where Luther lay concealed translating the Bible ; and there I spent one of the most interesting forenoons I ever got by travelling. Eisenach out as big as Dumfries, a very old town but washed, all built of brick and oak with red

Carlyle was Carlyle's mother, to whom many letters are addressed. It is pathetically noticed at pains to illustrate his description of the that it may become more real to her, by es to the familiar localities of Ecclefechan, f Repentance stood on Hoddam Hill.

tile roofs of amazing steepness and several grim old swag-bellied steeples and churches and palatial residences rising conspicuous over them. It stands on a perfect plain by the side of a little river, a plain smaller than Langholm and surrounded by hills which are not so high, yet of a somewhat similar character, and are all grassy and many of them thickly wooded. Directly on the south side of it there rises one hill, somewhat as Lockerbie hill is in height and position, but clothed with trim rich woods ; all the way through which wind paths with prospect houses, etc. On the top of the hill stands the old Wartburg, which it takes you three-quarters of an hour to reach ; an old castle—Watch Castle is the name of it—near 800 years old, where there is still a kind of garrison kept, perhaps twenty men ; though it does not look like a fortress ; what one sees from below being mainly two monstrous old houses, so to speak, with enormous roofs to them, comparable to two gigantic peat stacks set somewhat apart. There are other lower buildings that connect these when one gets up. There is also of course a wall all round—a donjon tower, standing like Repentance—and the Duke of Weimar, to whom the place belongs, is engaged in restorations, etc., and has many masons employed on it just now. I heeded little of all they had to show, except Junker Georg's<sup>1</sup> chamber, which is in the nearest of the peat stacks, the one nearest Eisenach and close by the gate when you enter on your right hand. A short stair of old worn stone conducts you up. They open a door, you enter a little apartment, less than your best room at Scotsbrig, I almost think less than your smallest, a very poor low room with an old leaded lattice window ; to me

<sup>1</sup> The name under which Luther passed when concealed there.

the most venerable of all rooms I ever entered. Luther's old oak table is there, about three feet square, and a huge fossil bone—vertebra of a mammoth—which served him for a footstool. Nothing else now in the room did certainly belong to him ; but these did. I kissed his old oak table, looked out of his window —making them open it for me—down the sheer castle wall into deep chasms, over the great ranges of silent woody mountains, and thought to myself, “Here once lived for a time one of God's soldiers. Be honour given him.” Luther's father and mother, painted by Cranach, are here—excellent old portraits—the father's with a dash of thrift, contention, and worldly wisdom in his old judicious, peasant countenance, the mother particularly pious, kind, true, and motherly—a noble old peasant woman. There is also Luther's self by the same Cranach ; a picture infinitely superior to what your lithograph would give a notion of ; a bold, effectual-looking rustic man, with brown eyes and skin ; with a dash of peaceable self-confidence and healthy defiance in the look of him. In fact one is called to forget the engraving in looking at this ; and indeed I have since found the engraving is not from this, but from another Cranach, to which also it has no tolerable resemblance. But I must say no more of the Wartburg. We saw the place on the plaster where he threw his inkstand—the plaster is all cut out and carried off by visitors—saw the outer staircase which is close by the door where he speaks of often hearing the Devil make noises. Poor and noble Luther ! I shall never forget this Wartburg, and am right glad of it.

That afternoon, there being no train convenient, we drove to Gotha in a kind of clatch—two horsed—very cheap in these parts ; a bright beautiful country

and a bonny little town ; belongs to Prince Albert's brother, more power to his elbow ! There we lodged in sumptuous rooms in an old quiet inn ; the very rooms where Napoleon lodged after being beaten at Leipzig. It seemed I slept last night where he breakfasted, if that would do much for me. At noon we came to Erfurt, a place of 30,000 inhabitants, and now a Prussian fortified town, all intersected with ditches of water for defence' sake. Streets very crooked, very narrow houses with old overhanging walls, and still the very room in it where Martin Luther lived when a monk, and, one guide-book said, the very Bible he found in the Convent library and read in this cell. This of the Bible proved to be wrong. Luther's particular Bible is not here, but is said to be at Berlin. Nothing really of Luther's there except the poor old latticed window glazed in lead, the main panes round, and about the size of a biggest *snap*, all bound together by whirligig intervals. It looks out to the west, over mere old cloistered courts and roof-tops against a church steeple, and is itself in the second storey. Except this and Luther's old ink-stand, a poor old oaken boxie with inkbottle and sand case in it now hardly sticking together, there is nothing to be seen here that actually belonged to Luther. The walls are all covered over with texts, etc., in painted letters by a later hand. The ceiling also is ornamentally painted ; and indeed the place is all altered now, and turned long ago into an orphan asylum, much of the old building gone and replaced by a new of a different figure. On one wall of the room, however, is again a portrait of Luther by Cranach, and this I found on inspection was the one your engravers had been vainly aiming at. Vainly, for this too is a noble face ; the eyes not turned up in

hypocritical devotion, but looking out in profound sorrow and determination, the lips too gathered in stern but affectionate firmness. He is in russet yellow boots, and the collar of his shirt is small and edged with black.

### Two MIGHTY CONTINENTS OF CLOUD

*Frederick W. Robertson to ——*

*October 30th, 1849.*

Walking down Regency Square, about four o'clock, I was struck by the singular beauty of the sky. Two mighty continents of cloud stretched from above me in parallel lines towards the horizon above the sea, where they seemed to meet. A river of purest blue, broad above my head, narrow by perspective in the distance, ran between them, seeming to lave their shores. Each of them had a rim or edge of bright gold, as if the river were rippling and glistening on the banks ; and innumerable islets of gold were dotted along both shores ; the parallelism of them, producing that effect of perspective which you see in an avenue of trees, gave a strong perception of the boundlessness of the distance into which they stretched away. Looking at sky and clouds, you scarcely estimate distance. The vault seems very measurable, and it does not occur to you that clouds which appear only a few yards in length are really acres and acres of vapour. This combination of forms, however, forced me to realise the immensity of space, and a deeper sense of grandeur and loveliness came to me than I have felt for many weeks. It has always been so. When I have not *perfect* union with humanity, I find in trees and clouds, and forms and colours of things inanimate, more that is congenial, more that I can inform with my own

being, more than speaks to me—than in my own species. There is something in the mere posture of looking up which gives a sense of grandeur ; and that, I suppose, is the reason why all nations have localised heaven there, and peopled the sky with Deity.



### III

## The Love of Cities

" Where the beasts that inhabit, Tame or wild, pursue one another  
either out of love or hate."

*William Wycherley (1640-1715)*

" London never was so entertaining since it had a steeple or a  
madhouse."

*Horace Walpole (1717-1797)*

These are Thy gods, O London !

*Charles Lamb (1775-1835)*

Streets, streets, streets, markets, theatres, churches.

*Charles Lamb (1775-1835)*

'Tis impossible to be dull in Fleet Street.

*Charles Lamb (1775-1835)*

He prefers Fleet Street to Skiddaw.

*Charles Lamb (1775-1835)*

In exile.

*Charles Lamb (1775-1835)*

“ WHERE THE BEASTS THAT INHABIT, TAME OR WILD,  
PURSUE ONE ANOTHER EITHER OUT OF LOVE  
OR HATE ”

*William Wycherley to Alexander Pope*

Nov. 5, 1705.

Yours of the 26th of October I have received, as I have always done yours, with no little satisfaction, and am proud to discover by it, that you find fault with the shortness of mine, which I think the best excuse for it. And though they, as you say, who have most wit or money are most sparing of either, there are some who appear poor to be thought rich, and are poor, which is my case. I cannot but rejoice that you have undergone so much discontent for want of my company ; and if you have a mind to punish me for my fault, which I could not help, defer your coming to town, and you will do it effectually. But I know your charity always exceeds your revenge, so that I will not despair of seeing you, and, in return to your inviting me to your forest, invite you to my forest, the town, where the beasts that inhabit, tame or wild, of long ears or horns, pursue one another either out of love or hatred. You may have the pleasure to see one pack of blood-hounds pursue another herd of brutes, to bring each other to their fall, which is their whole sport. Or if you affect a less bloody chase, you may see a pack of spaniels, called lovers, in hot pursuit of a two-legged vixen

who only flies the whole loud pack, to be singled out by one dog, who runs mute to catch her up the sooner from the rest, as they are making a noise to the loss of their game. In fine, this is the time for all sorts of sport in the town, when those of the country cease ; therefore, leave your forest of beasts for ours of brutes called men, who now in full cry, packed by the court or country, run down in the house of commons a deserted horned beast of the court to the diversion of the spectators.<sup>1</sup> Besides (more for your diversion), you may see not only the two great play-houses of the nation, those of the lords and commons, in dispute with one another, but the two other play-houses in high contest, because the members of one house are removed up to the other, as it is often done by the court for reasons of state.<sup>2</sup> Insomuch that the lower houses, I mean the play-houses, are going to act tragedies on one another without doors, and the sovereign is put to it, as it often happens in the other two houses, to silence one or both, to keep peace between them. Now I have told you all the news of the town. I am, etc.

“ LONDON NEVER WAS SO ENTERTAINING SINCE IT HAD  
A STEEPLE OR A MADHOUSE ”

*Horace Walpole to George Montagu, Esq.*

Arlington-street, Nov. 20, 1763.

You are in the wrong ; believe me you are in the

<sup>1</sup> Bowles conjectures that this reference is to Lord Keeper Wright, who had been dismissed from his office a little before Parliament met.

<sup>2</sup> The Drury Lane actors had gone over to the newly-built theatre in the Haymarket ; the respective managers, who had at first agreed upon partnership, were at war upon the subject.

wrong to stay in the country ; London never was so entertaining since it had a steeple or a madhouse. Cowards fight duels ; secretaries of state turn methodists on the Tuesday, and are expelled the play-house for blasphemy on Friday. I am not turned methodist, but patriot, and what is more extraordinary, am not going to have a place. What is more wonderful still, lord Hardwicke has made two of his sons resign their employments. I know my letter sounds as enigmatic as Merlin's almanack : but *my* events have really happened. I had almost persuaded myself like you to quit the world ; thank my stars I did not. Why I have done nothing but laugh since last Sunday ; though on Tuesday I was one of a hundred and eleven, who were outvoted by three hundred ; no laughing matter generally to a *true* patriot, whether he thinks his country undone or himself. Nay, I am still more absurd ; even for my dear country's sake I cannot bring myself to connect with lord Hardwicke, or the duke of Newcastle, though they are in the minority—an unprecedented case, not to love everybody one despises, when they are of the same side. On the contrary, I fear I resemble a fond woman, and dote on the *dear betrayer*. In short, and to write something that you can understand, you know I have long had a partiality for your cousin Sandwich, who has out-Sandwiched himself. He has impeached Wilkes for a blasphemous poem, and has been expelled for blasphemy himself by the beef-steak club at Covent-garden. Wilkes has been shot by Martin, and instead of being burnt at an *auto da fé*, as the bishop of Gloucester intended, is reverenced as a saint by the mob, and, if he dies, I suppose, the people will squint themselves into convulsions at his tomb, in honour of his memory. Now is not this

better than feeding one's birds and one's bantams, poring one's eyes out over old histories, not half so extraordinary as the present, or ambling to squire Bencow's on one's padnag, and playing at cribbage with one's brother John and one's parson ? Prithee come to town, and let us put off taking the veil for another year : besides, by this time twelvemonth we are sure the world will be a year older in wickedness, and we shall have more matter for meditation. One would not leave it methinks till it comes to the worst, and that time cannot be many months off. In the meantime, I have bespoken a dagger, in case the circumstance should grow so classic as to make it becoming to kill oneself ; however, though disposed to quit the world, as I have no mind to leave it entirely, I shall put off my death to the last minute, and do nothing rashly, till I see Mr. Pitt and lord Temple place themselves in their curule chairs in St. James's-market, and resign their throats to the victors. I am determined to see them dead first, lest they should play me a trick, and be hobbling to Buckingham-house, while I am shivering and waiting for them on the banks of Lethe. Adieu !

Yours, HORATIUS.

### THESE ARE THY GODS, O LONDON !

*Charles Lamb to Mr. Manning*

*August, 1800.*

I am going to change my lodgings, having received a hint that it would be agreeable, at our Lady's next feast. I have partly fixed upon most delectable rooms, which look out (when you stand a tip-toe) over the Thames, and Surrey Hills ; at the upper end of King's Bench walks, in the Temple. There

I shall have all the privacy of a house without the encumbrance, and shall be able to lock my friends out as often as I desire to hold free converse with my immortal mind, for my present lodgings resemble a minister's levee, I have so increased my acquaintance (as they call 'em) since I have resided in town. Like the country mouse, that had tasted a little of urbane manners, I long to be nibbling my own cheese by my dear self, without mouse-traps and time-traps. By my new plan, I shall be as airy, up four pair of stairs, as in the country ; and in a garden, in the midst of enchanting, more than Mahometan paradise, London, whose dirtiest drab-frequented alley, and her lowest bowing tradesman, I would not exchange for Skiddaw, Helvellyn, James, Walter, and the parson into the bargain. O ! her lamps of a night ! her rich goldsmiths, print-shops, toy-shops, mercers, hardwaremen, pastry-cooks ! St. Paul's churchyard, the Strand ! Exeter Change ! Charing Cross, with the man *upon* a black horse ! These are thy gods, O London ! An't you mightily moped on the banks of the Cam ? Had you not better come and set up here ? You can't think what a difference. All the streets and pavements are pure gold, I warrant you. At least, I know an alchymy that turns her mud into that metal—a mind that loves to be at home in crowds.

'Tis half-past twelve o'clock, and all sober people ought to be a-bed.

C. LAMB (as you may guess).

STREETS, STREETS, STREETS, MARKETS, THEATRES,  
CHURCHES

*Charles Lamb to Mr. Manning*

*October, 1800.*

The earth, and sea, and sky (when all is said,) is

but as a house to dwell in. If the inmates be courteous and good liquors flow like the conduits at an old coronation, if they can talk sensibly, and feel properly, I have no need to stand staring upon the gilded looking-glass (that strained my friend's purse-strings in the purchase) nor his five-shilling print over the mantelpiece of old Nabbs the carrier (which only betrays his false taste). Just as important to me (in a sense) is all the furniture of my world ; eye-pampering, but satisfies no heart. Streets, streets, streets, markets, theatres, churches, Covent Gardens, shops sparkling with pretty faces of industrious milliners, neat sempstresses, ladies cheapening, gentlemen behind counters lying, authors in the street with spectacles, George Dyers, (you may know them by their gait,) lamps lit at night, pastry-cooks and silversmiths' shops, beautiful Quakers of Pentonville, noise of coaches, drowsy cry of mechanic watchmen at night, with bucks reeling home drunk ; if you happen to wake at midnight, cries of Fire, and Stop thief ; inns of court, with their learned air, and halls, and butteries, just like Cambridge colleges ; old bookstalls, "Jeremy Taylors," "Burtons on Melancholy," and "Religio Medicis," on every stall. These are thy pleasures O London ! with-the-many-sins. O city, abounding in——, for these may Keswick and her giant brood go hang !

C. L.

'TIS IMPOSSIBLE TO BE DULL IN FLEET STREET

*Charles Lamb to Mr. Wordsworth*

*Jan. 30th, 1801.*

I ought before this to have replied to your very kind invitation into Cumberland. With you and

your sister I could gang anywhere ; but I am afraid whether I shall ever be able to afford so desperate a journey. Separate from the pleasure of your company, I don't much care if I never see a mountain in my life. I have passed all my days in London, until I have formed as many and intense local attachments, as any of you mountaineers can have done with dead nature. The lighted shops of the Strand and Fleet-street ; the innumerable trades, tradesmen, and customers, coaches, waggons, playhouses ; all the bustle and wickedness round about Covent Garden ; the very women of the Town ; the watchmen, drunken scenes, rattles—life awake, if you awake, at all hours of the night ; the impossibility of being dull in Fleet-street ; the crowds, the very dirt and mud, the sun shining upon houses and pavements, the print-shops, the old book stalls, parsons cheapening books, coffee-houses, steams of soups from kitchens, the pantomimes—London itself a pantomime and a masquerade—all these things work themselves into my mind, and feed me without a power of satiating me. The wonder of these sights impels me into night-walks about her crowded streets, and I often shed tears in the motley Strand from fulness of joy at so much life. All these emotions must be strange to you ; so are your rural emotions to me. But consider, what must I have been doing all my life, not to have lent great portions of my heart with usury to such scenes ?

My attachments are all local, purely local—I have no passion (or have had none since I was in love, and then it was the spurious engendering of poetry and books) to groves and valleys. The rooms where I was born, the furniture which has been before my eyes all my life, a book-case which has followed me about like a faithful dog (only exceeding him in know-

ledge), wherever I have moved, old chairs, old tables, streets, squares, where I have sunned myself, my school—these are my mistresses—have I not enough, without your mountains. I do not envy you. I should pity you, did I not know that the mind will make friends with anything. Your sun, and moon, and skies, and hills, and lakes, affect me no more, or scarcely come to me in more venerable characters, than as a gilded room with tapestry and tapers, where I might live with handsome visible objects. I consider the clouds above me but as a roof beautifully painted, but unable to satisfy the mind ; and at last, like the pictures of the apartment of a connoisseur, unable to afford him any longer a pleasure. So fading upon me, from disuse, have been the beauties of Nature, as they have been confinedly called ; so ever fresh, and green, and warm are all the inventions of men, and assemblies of men in this great city.

#### HE PREFERENCES FLEET STREET TO SKIDDAW

*Charles Lamb to Manning*

London, *September 24, 1802.*

MY DEAR MANNING,—Since the date of my last letter I have been a traveller. A strong desire seized me of visiting remote regions. My first impulse was to go and see Paris. It was a trivial objection to my aspiring mind, that I did not understand a word of the language, since I certainly intend some time in my life to see Paris, and equally certainly never intend to learn the language ; therefore that could be no objection. However, I am very glad I did not go, because you had left Paris (I see) before I could have set out. I believe, Stoddart promising to go

with me another year prevented that plan. My next scheme (for to my restless, ambitious mind London was become a bed of thorns) was to visit the far-famed Peak in Derbyshire, where the Devil sits, they say, without breeches. *This* my purer mind rejected as indelicate. And my final resolve was a tour to the Lakes. I set out with Mary to Keswick, without giving Coleridge any notice; for my time being precious did not admit of it. He received us with all the hospitality in the world, and gave up his time to show us all the wonders of the country. He dwells upon a small hill by the side of Keswick, in a comfortable house, quite enveloped on all sides by a net of mountains: great floundering bears and monsters they seemed, all couchant and asleep. We got in in the evening, travelling in a post-chaise from Penrith, in the midst of a gorgeous sunshine, which transmuted all the mountains into colours, purple, etc., etc. We thought we had got into fairyland. But that went off (as it never came again—while we stayed we had no more fine sunsets); and we entered Coleridge's comfortable study just in the dusk, when the mountains were all dark with clouds upon their heads. Such an impression I never received from objects of sight before, nor do I suppose I can ever again. Glorious creatures, fine old fellows, Skiddaw, etc. I never shall forget ye, how ye lay about that night, like an intrenchment; gone to bed, as it seemed for the night, but promising that ye were to be seen in the morning. Coleridge had got a blazing fire in his study; which is a large, antique, ill-shaped room, with an old-fashioned organ, never played upon, big enough for a church, shelves of scattered folios, an *Æolian* harp, and an old sofa, half-bed, etc. And all looking out upon the last fading view of Skiddaw

and his broad-breasted brethren : what a night ! Here we stayed three full weeks, in which time I visited Wordsworth's cottage, where we stayed a day or two with the Clarksons (good people and most hospitable, at whose house we tarried one day and night), and saw Lloyd. The Wordsworths were gone to Calais. They have since been in London and passed much time with us : he is now gone into Yorkshire to be married. So we have seen Keswick, Grasmere, Ambleside, Ullswater (where the Clarksons live), and a place at the other end of Ullswater—I forget the name—to which we travelled on a very sultry day, over the middle of Helvellyn. We have clambered up to the top of Skiddaw, and I have waded up the bed of Lodore. In fine, I have satisfied myself, that there is such a thing as that which tourists call *romantic*, which I very much suspected before : they make such a spluttering about it, and toss their splendid epithets around them, till they give as dim a light as at four o'clock next morning the lamps do after an illumination. Mary was excessively tired, when she got about half-way up Skiddaw, but we came to a cold rill (than which nothing can be imagined more cold, running over cold stones), and with the reinforcement of a draught of cold water she surmounted it most manfully. Oh, its fine black head, and the bleak air atop of it, with a prospect of mountains all about, and about, making you giddy ; and then Scotland afar off, and the border countries so famous in song and ballad ! It was a day that will stand out, like a mountain, I am sure, in my life. But I am returned (I have now been come home near three weeks—I was a month out), and you cannot conceive the degradation I felt at first, from being accustomed to wander free as air among mountains,

## CHARLES LAMB

and bathe in rivers without being controlled by any one, to come home and *work*. I felt very *little*. I had been dreaming I was a very great man. But that is going off, and I find I shall conform in time to that state of life to which it has pleased God to call me. Besides, after all, Fleet-Street and the Strand are better places to live in for good and all than among Skiddaw. Still, I turn back to those great places where I wandered about, participating in their greatness. After all, I could not *live* in Skiddaw. I could spend a year—two, three years—among them, but I must have a prospect of seeing Fleet-Street at the end of that time, or I should mope and pine away, I know. Still, Skiddaw is a fine creature.

### IN EXILE

*Charles Lamb to William Wordsworth*

*p.m., January 22, 1830.*

And is it a year since we parted from you at the steps of Edmonton Stage? There are not now the years that there used to be. The tale of the dwindled age of men, reported of successional mankind, is true of the same man only. We do not live a year in a year now. 'Tis a *punctum stans*. The seasons pass us with indifference. Spring cheers not, nor winter heightens our gloom, Autumn hath foregone its moralities, they are hey-pass re-pass [as] in a show-box. Yet as far as last year occurs back, for they scarce show a reflex now, they make no memory as heretofore—'twas sufficiently gloomy. Let the sullen nothing pass.

Suffice it that after sad spirits prolonged thro' many of its months, as it called them, we have cast our skins, have taken a farewell of the pompous trouble-

some trifle called housekeeping, and are settled down into poor boarders and lodgers at next door with an old couple, the Baucis and Baucida of dull Enfield. Here we have nothing to do with our victuals but to eat them, with the garden but to see it grow, with the tax gatherer but to hear him knock, with the maid but to hear her scolded. Scot and lot, butcher, baker, are things unknown to us save as spectators of the pageant. We are fed we know not how, quietists, confiding ravens. We have the *otium pro dignitate*, a respectable insignificance. Yet in the self-condemned obliviousness, in the stagnation, some modest yearnings of life, not quite kill'd, rise, prompting me that there was a London, and that I was of that old Jerusalem. In dreams I am in Fleetmarket, but I wake and cry to sleep again. I die hard, a stubborn Eloisa in this destestable Paraclete. What have I gained by health? intolerable dulness. What by early hours and moderate meals?—a total blank. O never let the lying poets be believed, who 'tice men from the cheerful haunts of streets—or think they mean it not of a country village. In the ruins of Palmyra I could gird myself up to solitude, or muse to the snorings of the Seven Sleepers, but to have a little teasing image of a town about one, country folks that do not look like country folks, shops two yards square, half a dozen apples and two penn'orth of overlooked gingerbread for the lofty fruiterers of Oxford Street—and, for the immortal book and print stalls, a circulating library that stands still, where the show-picture is a last year's Valentine, and whither the fame of the last ten Scotch novels has not yet travel'd (marry, they just begin to be conscious of the Redgauntlet), to have a new plastered flat church, and to be wishing that i was but a Cathedral. The

very blackguards here are degenerate. The topping gentry, stock brokers. The passengers too many to ensure your quiet, or let you go about whistling, or gaping—too few to be the fine indifferent pageants of Fleet Street. Confining, room-keeping thickest winter is yet more bearable here than the gaudy months. Among one's books at one's fire by candle one is soothed into an oblivion that one is not in the country, but with the light the green fields return, till I gaze, and in a calenture can plunge myself into Saint Giles's. O let no native Londoner imagine that health, and rest, and innocent occupation, interchange of converse, sweet and recreative study, can make the country any thing better than altogether odious and detestable. A garden was the primitive prison till man with promethean felicity and boldness luckily sinn'd himself out of it. Thence follow'd Babylon, Nineveh, Venice, London, haberdashers, goldsmiths, taverns, playhouses, satires, epigrams, puns—these all came in on the town part, and the thither side of innocence. Man found out inventions.

From my den I return you condolence for your decaying sight, not for any thing there is to see in the country, but for the miss of the pleasure of reading a London newspaper. The poets are as well to listen to, any thing high may, nay must, be read out—you read it to yourself with an imaginary auditor—but the light paragraphs must be glid over by the proper eye, mouthing mumbles their gossamery substance. 'Tis these trifles I should mourn in fading sight. A newspaper is the single gleam of comfort I receive here, it comes from rich Cathay with tidings of mankind. Yet I could not attend to it read out by the most beloved voice. But your eyes do not get worse, I gather. O for the collyrium of Tobias enclosed in a

whiting's liver to send you with no apocryphal good wishes ! The last long time I heard from you, you had knock'd your head against something. Do not do so. For your head (I do not flatter) is not a nob, or the top of a brass nail, or the end of a nine-pin—unless a Vulcanian hammer could fairly batter a “Recluse” out of it, then would I bid the smirch'd god knock and knock lustily, the two-handed skinker. What a nice long letter Dorothy has written ! Mary must squeeze out a line *propriâ manu*, but indeed her fingers have been incorrigibly nervous to letter-writing for a long interval. 'Twill please you all to hear that, tho' I fret like a lion in a net, her present health and spirits are better than they have been for some time past : she is absolutely three years and a half younger, as I tell her, since we have adopted this boarding plan. Our providers are an honest pair, dame Westwood and her husband—he, when the light of prosperity shined on them, a moderately thriving haberdasher within Bow Bells, retired since with something under a competence, writes himself parcel gentleman, hath borne parish offices, sings fine old sea songs at threescore and ten, sighs only now and then when he thinks that he has a son on his hands about 15, whom he finds a difficulty in getting out into the world, and then checks a sigh with muttering, as I once heard him prettily, not meaning to be heard, “ I have married my daughter however,”—takes the weather as it comes, outsides it to town in severest season, and a' winter nights tells old stories not tending to literature, how comfortable to author-rid folks ! and has *one anecdote*, upon which and about forty pounds a year he seems to have retired in green old age. It was how he was a *rider* in his youth, travelling for shops, and once (not

to baulk his employer's bargain) on a sweltering day in August, rode foaming into Dunstable upon a *mad horse* to the dismal and expostulary wonderment of innkeepers, ostlers, etc., who declared they would not have bestrid the beast to win the Darby. Understand the creature gall'd to death and desperation by gad flies, cormorants winged, worse than beset Inachus' daughter. This he tells, this he brindles and burnishes on a' winter's eves, 'tis his star of set glory, his rejuvenescence to descant upon. Far from me be it (*diu avertant*) to look a gift story in the mouth, or cruelly to surmise (as those who doubt the plunge of Curtius) that the inseparable conjuncture of man and beast, the centaur-phenomenon that stagger'd all Dunstable, might have been the effect of unromantic necessity, that the horse-part carried the reasoning, willy nilly, that needs must when such a devil drove, that certain spiral configurations in the frame of Thomas Westwood unfriendly to alighting, made the alliance more forcible than voluntary. Let him enjoy his fame for me, nor let me hint a whisper that shall dismount Bellerophon. Put case he was an involuntary martyr, yet if in the fiery conflict he buckled the soul of a constant haberdasher to him, and adopted his flames, let Accident and He share the glory! You would all like Thomas Westwood.



How weak is painting to describe a man! Say that he stands four feet and a nail high by his own

yard measure, which like the Sceptre of Agamemnon shall never sprout again, still you have no adequate idea, nor when I tell you that his dear hump, which I have favour'd in the picture, seems to me of the Buffalo—indicative and repository of mild qualities, a budget of kindnesses, still you have not the man. Knew you old Norris of the Temple, 60 years ours and our father's friend, he was not more natural to us than this old W. the acquaintance of scarce more weeks. Under his roof now ought I to take my rest, but that back-looking ambition tells me I might yet be a Londoner. Well, if we ever do move, we have encumbrances the less to impede us : all our furniture has faded under the auctioneer's hammer, going for nothing like the tarnish'd frippery of the prodigal, and we have only a spoon or two left to bless us. Clothed we came into Enfield, and naked we must go out of it. I would live in London shirtless, bookless.

IV

## Criticising the Critics

His hatred of mawkish popularity.

*John Keats (1795-1821)*

Concerning the scandalous critiques of *Endymion* in *Blackwood* and the *Quarterly Review*.

*John Keats (1795-1821)*

The parable of the drummer-boy.

*John Keats (1795-1821)*

In defence of Keats.

*Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822)*

Lavengro and his wife, being aroused, proclaim war.

*Mr. and Mrs. George Borrow (1803-1881)*

## HIS HATRED OF MAWKISH POPULARITY

*John Keats to J. H. Reynolds*

Teignmouth, April 9, 1818.

MY DEAR REYNOLDS —

Since you all agree that the thing is bad, it must be so<sup>1</sup>—though I am not aware that there is anything like Hunt in it (and if there is, it is my natural way, and I have something in common with Hunt). Look over it again, and examine into the motives, the seeds, from which every one sentence sprang.

I have not the slightest feeling of humility towards the public, or to anything in existence but the Eternal Being, the Principle of Beauty, and the Memory of great Men. When I am writing for myself, for the mere sake of the moment's enjoyment, perhaps nature has its course with me; but a Preface is written to the public—a thing I cannot help looking upon as an enemy, and which I cannot address without feelings of hostility. If I write a Preface in a supple or subdued style, it will not be in character with me as a public speaker.

I would be subdued before my friends, and thank them for subduing me; but among multitudes of men I have no feel of stooping; I hate the idea of humility to them.

<sup>1</sup> The first preface to *Endymion*. Within twenty-four hours he had reconsidered the matter here discussed, and had written the beautiful apology which now stands as preface.

I never wrote one single line of poetry with the least shadow of public thought.

Forgive me for vexing you, and making a Trojan horse of such a trifle, both with respect to the matter in question, and myself ; but it eases me to tell you : I could not live without the love of my friends ; I would jump down *Ætna* for any great public good, but I hate a mawkish popularity. I cannot be subdued before them. My glory would be to daunt and dazzle the thousand jabberers about pictures and books. I see swarms of porcupines with their quills erect “like lime-twigs set to catch my winged book,” and I would fright them away with a touch. You will say my Preface is not much of a touch. It would have been too insulting “to begin from Jove,” and I could not (set) a golden head upon a thing of clay. If there is any fault in the Preface, it is not affection, but an undersong of disrespect to the public. If I write another Preface, it must be done without a thought of those people. I will think about it. If it should not reach you in four or five days, tell Taylor to publish it without a Preface, and let the Dedication simply stand—“Inscribed to the Memory of Thomas Chatterton.”

#### CONCERNING THE SCANDALOUS CRITIQUES OF ENDYMION IN BLACKWOOD AND THE QUARTERLY REVIEW

*John Keats to James Augustus Hessey*

*9 October, 1818.*

MY DEAR HESSEY,

You are very good in sending me the letters from the *Chronicle*—and I am very bad in not acknowledging such a kindness sooner—pray forgive me. It has so chanced that I have had that paper every day

—I have seen to-day's. I cannot but feel indebted to those gentlemen who have taken my part. As for the rest, I begin to get a little acquainted with my own strength and weakness.—Praise or blame has but a momentary effect on the man whose love of beauty in the abstract makes him a severe critic on his own Works. My own domestic criticism has given me pain without comparison beyond what Blackwood or the Quarterly could possibly inflict—and also when I feel I am right, no external praise can give me such a glow as my own solitary reperception and ratification of what is fine. J. S. is perfectly right in regard to the slip-shod *Endymion*. That it is so is no fault of mine. No!—though it may sound a little paradoxical. It is as good as I had power to make it—by myself. Had I been nervous about its being a perfect piece, and with that view asked advice, and trembled over every page, it would not have been written; for it is not in my nature to fumble—I will write independently.—I have written independently *without Judgment*. I may write independently, and *with Judgment*, hereafter. The Genius of Poetry must work out its own salvation in a man: It cannot be matured by law and precept, but by sensation and watchfulness in itself. That which is creative must create itself. In "*Endymion*," I leaped headlong into the sea, and thereby have become better acquainted with the Soundings, the quicksands, and the rocks, than if I had stayed upon the green shore, and piped a silly pipe, and took tea and comfortable advice. I was never afraid of failure; for I would sooner fail than not be among the greatest. But I am nigh getting into a rant. So, with remembrances to Taylor and Woodhouse, etc., I am

Yours very sincerely  
JOHN KEATS.

## THE PARABLE OF THE DRUMMER-BOY

*John Keats to John Taylor*

Winchester, 23 August, 1819.

MY DEAR TAYLOR,

. . . Brown and I have together been engaged (this I should wish to remain secret) on a Tragedy which I have just finished and from which we hope to share moderate profits. . . . I feel every confidence that, if I choose, I may be a popular writer. That I will never be ; but for all that I will get a livelihood. I equally dislike the favour of the public with the love of a woman. They are both a cloying treacle to the wings of Independence. I shall ever consider them (People) as debtors to me for verses, not myself to them for admiration—which I can do without. I have of late been indulging my spleen by composing a preface AT them : after all resolving never to write a preface at all. “There are so many verses,” would I have said to them, “give so much means for me to buy pleasure with, as a relief to my hours of labour.” —You will observe at the end of this, if you put down the letter, “How a solitary life engenders pride and egotism !” True—I know it does ; but this pride and egotism will enable me to write finer things than anything else could—so I will indulge it. Just so much as I am humbled by the genius above my grasp am I exalted and look with hate and contempt upon the literary world.—A drummer-boy who holds out his hand familiarly to a field-marshall,—that drummer-boy with me is the good word and favour of the public. Who could wish to be among the common-place crowd of the little famous—who are each individually lost in a throng made up of themselves ? Is this worth louting or playing the hypocrite for ? To beg suffrages

for a seat on the benches of a myriad-aristocracy in letters? This is not wise—I am not a wise man. 'Tis pride—I will give you a definition of a proud man. He is a man who has neither Vanity nor Wisdom—one filled with hatreds cannot be vain, neither can he be wise. Pardon me for hammering instead of writing. Remember me to Woodhouse, Hessey, and all in Percy Street.

Ever yours sincerely  
JOHN KEATS.

#### IN DEFENCE OF KEATS

*Percy Bysshe Shelley to the Editor of the Quarterly Review*<sup>1</sup>

1820.

SIR,—

Should you cast your eye on the signature of this letter before you read the contents, you might imagine that they related to a slanderous paper which appeared in your *Review* some time since. I never notice anonymous attacks. The wretch who wrote it has doubtless the additional reward of a consciousness of his motives, besides the thirty guineas a sheet or whatever it is that you pay him. Of course you cannot be answerable for all the writings which you edit, and I certainly bear you no ill-will for having edited the abuse to which I allude—indeed, I was too much amused by being compared to Pharaoh, not readily to forgive editor, printer, publisher, stitcher, or any one, except the despicable writer, connected with something too exquisitely entertaining. Seriously speaking, I am not in the habit of permitting myself to be disturbed by what is said or written of

<sup>1</sup> This letter was never sent.

me, though, I dare say, I may be condemned sometimes justly enough. But I feel, in respect to the writer in question, that "I am there sitting, where he durst not soar."

The case is different with the unfortunate subject of this letter, the author of *Endymion*, to whose feelings and situations I entreat you to allow me to call your attention. I write considerably in the dark; but if it is Mr. Gifford that I am addressing, I am persuaded that, in an appeal to his humanity and justice, he will acknowledge the *fas ab hoste doceri*. I am aware that the first duty of a reviewer is towards the public, and I am willing to confess that the *Endymion* is a poem considerably defective, and that, perhaps, it deserved as much censure as the pages of your *Review* record against it; but, not to mention that there is a certain contemptuousness of phraseology from which it is difficult for a critic to abstain, in the review of *Endymion*, I do not think that the writer has given it its due praise. Surely the poem, with all its faults, is a very remarkable production for a man of Keats' age, and the promise of ultimate excellence is such as has rarely been afforded even by such as have afterwards attained high literary eminence. Look at Book II., line 833, etc., and Book III., line 113 to 120; read down that page, and then again from line 195. I could cite many other passages, to convince you that it deserved milder usage. Why it should have been reviewed at all, excepting for the purpose of bringing its excellences into notice, I cannot conceive, for it was very little read, and there was no danger that it should become a model to the age of that false taste with which I confess that it is replenished.

Poor Keats was thrown into a dreadful state of

mind by this review, which, I am persuaded, was not written with any intention of producing the effect, to which it has, at least, greatly contributed, of embittering his existence, and inducing a disease, from which there are now but faint hopes of his recovery. The first effects are described to me to have resembled insanity, and it was by assiduous watching that he was restrained from effecting purposes of suicide.<sup>1</sup> The agony of his sufferings at length produced the rupture of a blood vessel in the lungs, and the usual process of consumption appears to have begun. He is coming to pay me a visit in Italy ;<sup>2</sup> but I fear that, unless his mind can be kept tranquil, little is to be hoped from the mere influence of climate.

But let me not extort anything from your pity. I have just seen a second volume,<sup>3</sup> published by him evidently in careless despair. I have desired my bookseller to send you a copy, and allow me to solicit your especial attention to the fragment of a poem entitled *Hyperion*, the composition of which was checked by the Review in question. The great proportion of this piece is surely in the very highest style of poetry. I speak impartially, for the canons of taste to which Keats has conformed in his other compositions are the very reverse of my own. I leave you to judge for yourself ; it would be an insult to you to suppose that, from motives however honourable, you would lend yourself to a deception of the public.

<sup>1</sup> Shelley was misinformed as to the cause of the illness of Keats, which was the madness of love.

<sup>2</sup> Keats went to Rome and there died and was buried. He never visited Shelley.

<sup>3</sup> *Lamia and other Poems*, published 1820.

LAVENGRO AND HIS WIFE, BEING AROUSED, PROCLAIM  
WAR*Mr. and Mrs. George Borrow to John Murray* <sup>1</sup>*January 29, 1855.*

DEAR MR. MURRAY,—

We have received your letters. In the first place I beg leave to say something on a very principal point. You talk about *conditions* of publishing. Mr. Borrow has not the slightest wish to publish the book *Romany Rye*. The MS. was left with you because you wished to see it, and when left you were particularly requested not to let it pass out of your own hands. But it seems you have shown it to various individuals whose opinions you repeat. What those opinions are worth may be gathered from the following fact.

The book is one of the most learned works ever written; yet in the summary of the opinions which you give, not one single allusion is made to the learning which pervades the book, no more than if it contained none at all. It is treated just as if all the philological and historical facts were mere inventions, and the book a common novel. . . .

With regard to *Lavengro* it is necessary to observe that if ever a book experienced infamous and undeserved treatment it was that book. It was (assailed by every trumpery creature who hated Mr. Borrow on account of his reputation and acquirements)<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This letter was partly written by Mrs. Borrow at her husband's dictation, partly by Borrow himself, but was signed by Mrs. Borrow. It accounts for the delay in the publication of *Romany Rye*, which did not take place until 1857, although promised since the appearance of *Lavengro* in 1851.

<sup>2</sup> The portion in parenthesis was erased, Mr. Borrow writing over it what follows with his own hand.

attacked in every form that envy and malice could suggest, on account of Mr. Borrow's acquirements and the success of the *Bible in Spain*, and it was deserted by those whose duty it was, in some degree, to have protected it. No attempt was ever made to refute the vile calumny that it was a book got up against the Popish agitation of '51. It was written years previous to that period—a fact of which none is better aware than the Publisher. Is that calumny to be still permitted to go unanswered?<sup>1</sup> (The following in Borrow's handwriting.)

If these suggestions are attended to, well and good ; if not Mr. Borrow can bide his time. He is independent of the public and of everybody. Say no more on that Russian subject. Mr. Borrow has had quite enough of the Press. If he wrote a book on Russia, it would be said to be like the *Bible in Spain*, or it would be said to be *unlike* the *Bible in Spain*, and would be blamed in either case. He has written a book in connexion with England such as no other body could have written, and he now rests from his labours. He has found England an ungrateful country. It owes much to him, and he owes nothing to it. If he had been a low ignorant impostor, like a person he could name, he would have been employed and honoured.

(In the handwriting of Mrs. B.)—I remain—Yours sincerely,

MARY BORROW.

<sup>1</sup> No calumny at all (writes Dr. Knapp), but a natural inference, and one which Mr. Murray and Mr. Woodfall both noted in their letters to Borrow, before the reviewers proclaimed it.





V

The Artist and His Art

The general intention of "The Faëry Queen."

*Edmund Spenser (1552?-1599)*

"The chief end I propose to myself in all my labours, is to vex the world."

*Dean Swift (1667-1745)*

An author's contempt for contemporary authors.

*Horace Walpole (1717-1797)*

He believes in himself.

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*Charles Lamb (1775-1835)*

Elia paints for a Quaker friend the joys of living by literature.

*Charles Lamb (1775-1835)*

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The pleasures of literature and state-craft compared.

*Lord Macaulay (1800-1859)*

Agonising over Cromwell's letters.

*Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881)*

Uttering his heart about the public—and some other things beside.

*Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-1894)*

## THE GENERAL INTENTION OF “THE FAËRY QUEEN”

*Edmund Spenser to Sir Walter Raleigh*

*Januarie 23, 1589.*

SIR,—

Knowing how doubtfully all Allegories may be construed, and the booke of mine, which I have entitled *The Faëry Queene*, being a continued Allegorie, or darke conceit, I have thought good, as well for avoyding of jealous opinions and misconstructions, as also for your better light in reading thereof, (being so by you commanded) to discover unto you the generall intention and meaning, which in the whole course thereof I have fashioned, without expressing of any particular purposes, or by-accidents therein occasioned. The generall end therefore of all the booke, is to fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline. Which for that I conceived shoulde be most plausible and pleasing, beeing coloured with an historicall fiction, the which the most part of men delight to read, rather for varietie of matter than for profit of the ensample: I chose the historie of king Arthure, as most fit for the excellencie of his person, beeing made famous by many men’s former workes, and also furthest from the danger of envie, and suspicion of present time. In which I have followed all the antique poets historicall: first Homer, who in the persons of Agamemnon and Ulysses hath ensampled

a good governour and a vertuous man, the one in his *Ilias*, the other in his *Odysseis* : then Virgil, whose like intention was to doe in the person of *Æneas* : after him Ariosto comprised them both in his *Orlando* : and lately Tasso dissevered them againe, and formed both parts in two persons, namely, that part which they in philosophy call *Ethice*, or vertues of a private man, coloured in his *Rinaldo* ; the other named *Politice*, in his *Godfredo*. By ensample of which excellent Poets, I labour to pourtraict in *Arthure*, before he was king, the image of a brave knight, perfected in the twelve private morall vertues, as Aristotle hath devised ; the which is the purpose of these first twelve bookees : which if I finde to be well accepted, I may be perhaps encoraged to frame the other part of the pollitike vertues in his person, after he came to bee king.

To some, I know, this Methode will seeme displeasant, which had rather have good discipline delivered plainly in way of precepts, or sermoned at large, as they use, then thus clowidly enwrapped in Allegoricall devises. But such, mee seeme, should be satisfied with the use of these dayes, seeing all things accounted by their shewes, and nothing esteemed of, that is not delightfull and pleasing to common sense. For this cause is Xenophon preferred before Plato, for that the one, in the exquisite depth of his judgment, formed a Commonwealth such as it should be ; but the other, in the person of Cyrus and the Persians, fashioned a government, such as might best be. So much profitabile and gracious is doctrine by ensample then by rule. So have I laboured to doe in the person of *Arthure* : whom I conceive, after his long education by Timon (to whom he was by Merlin delivered to be brought up, so soone as he was borne of the Lady

Igrayne) to have seene in a dreame or vision the Faery Queene, with whose excellent beautie ravished, hee awaking, resolved to seeke her out: and so, being by Merlin armed, and by Timon thoroughly instructed, he went to seeke her forth in Faery land.

“ THE CHIEF END I PROPOSE TO MYSELF IN ALL MY LABOURS, IS TO VEX THE WORLD ”

*Dean Swift to Alexander Pope*

*September 29, 1725.*

I have employed my time (besides ditching) in finishing, correcting, amending, and transcribing my *Travels* (*Gulliver's*), in four parts complete, newly augmented and intended for the press when the world shall deserve them, or rather when a printer shall be found brave enough to venture his ears. I like the scheme of our meeting after distresses and dispersions.

But the chief end I propose to myself in all my labours, is to vex the world, rather than divert it; and if I could compass that design without hurting my own person or fortune, I would be the most indefatigable writer you have ever seen without reading. I am exceedingly pleased that you have done with translations. Lord Treasurer Oxford often lamented that a rascally world should lay you under a necessity of misemploying your genius for so long a time. But since you will now be so much better employed, when you think of the world, give it one lash the more at my request.

I have ever hated all nations, professions, and communities; and all my love is towards individuals.

For instance, I hate the tribe of lawyers; but I love Counsellor Such-a-one, and Judge Such-a-one.

It is so with physicians. I will not speak of my

own trade, soldiers, English, Scotch, French, and the rest.

But principally I hate and detest that animal called man, although I heartily love John, Peter, Thomas, and so forth. This is the system upon which I have governed myself many years (but do not tell), and so I shall go on until I have done with them.

I have got materials toward a treatise proving the falsity of that definition *animal rationale*, and to show it should be only *rationis capax*. Upon this great foundation of misanthropy (though not in Timon's manner) the whole building of my travels is erected ; and I never will have peace of mind till all honest men are of my opinion.

By consequence you are to embrace it immediately, and procure that all who deserve my esteem may do so too.

The matter is so clear, that it will admit of no dispute ; nay, I will hold a hundred pounds that you and I agree in the point.

#### AN AUTHOR'S CONTEMPT FOR CONTEMPORARY AUTHORS

*Horace Walpole to —*

Arlington Street, April 27, 1773.

Mr. Gough wants to be introduced to me ! Indeed ! I would see him, as he has been mid-wife to Masters ;<sup>1</sup> but he is so dull that he would only be troublesome —and besides, you know I shun authors, and would never have been one myself, if it obliged me to keep such bad company. They are always in earnest, and think their profession serious, and will dwell upon

<sup>1</sup> Robert Masters, historian and antiquarian (1713-98). In 1771, he published *Some Remarks on Mr. Walpole's Historic Doubts on the Life and Reign of Richard III.*

trifles, and reverence learning. I laugh at all these things, and write only to laugh at them and divert myself. None of us are authors of any consequence, and it is the most ridiculous of all vanities to be vain of being *mediocre*. A page in a great author humbles me to the dust, and the conversation of those that are not superior to myself reminds me of what will be thought of myself. I blush to flatter them ; or to be flattered by them ; and should dread letters being published some time or other, in which they would relate our interviews, and we should appear like those puny conceited witlings in Shenstone's and Hughes's correspondence, who give themselves airs from being in possession of the soil of Parnassus for the time being ; as peers are proud because they enjoy the estates of great men who went before them. Mr. Gough is very welcome to see Strawberry-hill, or I would help him to any scraps in my possession that would assist his publications, though he is one of those industrious who are only re-burying the dead—but I cannot be acquainted with him ; it is contrary to my system and my humour ; and besides I know nothing of barrows and Danish entrenchments, and Saxon barbarisms and Phœnician characters—in short, I know nothing of those ages that knew nothing—then how should I be of use to modern literati ? All the Scotch metaphysicians have sent me their works. I did not read one of them, because I do not understand what is not understood by those that write about it ; and I did not get acquainted with one of the writers. I should like to be intimate with Mr. Anstey,<sup>1</sup> even though he

<sup>1</sup> Christopher Anstey, author of the *New Bath Guide*. Among other works Anstey published *The Patriot*, a "Pindaric Epistle" on prize-fighting, addressed to Buckhorse, a notorious bruiser.

wrote *Lord Buckhorse*, or with the author of the *Heroic Epistle*—I have no thirst to know the rest of my contemporaries, from the absurd bombast of Dr. Johnson down to the silly Dr. Goldsmith, though the latter changeling has had bright gleams of parts, and the former had sense, till he changed it for words, and sold it for a pension. Don't think me scornful. Recollect that I have seen Pope, and lived with Gray. Adieu !

### HE BELIEVES IN HIMSELF

*William Blake to Thomas Butts*

Felpham, November 22, 1802.

DEAR SIR,—My brother tells me that he fears you are offended with me. I fear so too, because there appears some reason why you might be so ; but when you have heard me out, you will not be so.

I have now given two years to the intense study of those parts of the art which relate to light and shade and colour, and am convinced that either my understanding is incapable of comprehending the beauties of colouring, or the pictures which I painted for you are equal in every part of the art, and superior in one, to anything that has been done since the age of Raphael.

All Sir J. Reynolds' Discourses to the Royal Academy will show that the Venetian finesse in art can never be united with the majesty of colouring necessary to historical beauty ; and in a letter to the Rev. Mr. Gilpin, author of a work on picturesque scenery, he says thus :

“ It may be worth consideration whether the epithet picturesque is not applicable to the excellences of the inferior schools rather than to the higher.”

“ The works of Michael Angelo, Raphael, etc.,

appear to me to have nothing of it ; whereas Rubens and the Venetian painters may almost be said to have nothing else."

"Perhaps *picturesque* is somewhat synonymous to the word taste, which we should think improperly applied to Homer or Milton, but very well to Prior or Pope. I suspect that the application of these words is to excellences of an inferior order, and which are incompatible with the grand style. You are certainly right in saying that variety of tints and forms is picturesque ; but it must be remembered, on the other hand, that the reverse of this (*uniformity of colour* and a *long continuation of lines*) produces grandeur."

So says Sir Joshua, and so say I ; for I have now proved that the parts of the art which I neglected to display, in those little pictures and drawings which I had the pleasure and profit to do for you, are incompatible with the designs.

There is nothing in the art which our painters do that I can confess myself ignorant of. I also know and understand, and can assuredly affirm, that the works I have done for you are equal to the Caracci or Raphael (and I am now some years older than Raphael was when he died). I say they are equal to Caracci or Raphael, or else I am blind, stupid, ignorant, and incapable, in two years' study, to understand those things which a boarding-school miss can comprehend in a fortnight. Be assured, my dear friend, that there is not one touch in those drawings and pictures but what came from my head and my heart in unison ; that I am proud of being their author, and grateful to you my employer ; and that I look upon you as the chief of my friends, whom I would endeavour to please, because you, among all men, have enabled me to produce these things. I would not send you a

drawing or a picture till I had again reconsidered my notions of art, and had put myself back as if I was a learner.

I have proved that I am right, and shall now go on with the vigour I was, in my childhood, famous for. But I do not pretend to be perfect : yet, if my works have faults, Caracci's, Correggio's, and Raphael's have faults also.

Let me observe that the yellow-leather flesh of old men, the ill-drawn and ugly old women, and, above all, the daubed black-and-yellow shadows that are found in most fine, ay, and the finest pictures, I altogether reject as ruinous to effect, though connoisseurs may think otherwise.

Let me also notice that Caracci's pictures are not like Correggio's, nor Correggio's like Raphael's ; and, if neither of them was to be encouraged till he did like any of the others, he must die without encouragement. My pictures are unlike any of these painters, and I would have them to be so. I think the manner I adopt more perfect than any other. No doubt they thought the same of theirs. You w'll be tempted to think that, as I improve, the pictures, etc., that I did for you are not what I would now wish them to be.

On this I beg to say that they are what I intended them, and that I know I never shall do better ; for, if I were to do them over again, they would lose as much as they gained, because they were done in the heat of my spirits.

But you will justly inquire why I have not written all this time to you. I answer I have been very unhappy, and could not think of troubling you about it, or any of my real friends. (I have written many letters to you which I burned and did not send.) And why I have not before now finished the miniatur<sup>o</sup> I

promised to Mrs. Butts, I answer I have not, till now, in any degree pleased myself, and now I must entreat you to excuse faults, for portrait-painting is the direct contrary to designing and historical painting, in every respect.

If you have not nature before you for every touch, you cannot paint portrait; and if you have nature before you at all, you cannot paint history. It was Michael Angelo's opinion, and is mine.

Pray give my wife's love with mine to Mrs. Butts. Assure her that it cannot be long before I have the pleasure of painting from you in person, and then she may expect a likeness. But now I have done all I could, and know she will forgive any failure in consideration of the endeavour.

And now let me finish with assuring you that, though I have been very unhappy, I am so no longer. I am again emerged into the light of day; I still and shall to eternity embrace Christianity, and adore Him who is the express image of God; but I have travelled through perils and darkness not unlike a champion. I have conquered, and shall go on conquering. Nothing can withstand the fury of my course among the stars of God and in the abysses of the accuser.

My enthusiasm is still what it was, only enlarged and confirmed.

I now send two pictures, and hope you will approve of them.

I have enclosed the account of money received and work done, which I ought long ago to have sent you. Pray forgive errors in omissions of this kind. I am incapable of many attentions which it is my duty to observe towards you, through multitude of employment, and through hope of soon seeing you again. I often omit to inquire of you, but pray let me now

hear how you do, and of the welfare of your family.

Accept my sincere love and respect.—I remain yours sincerely,

WILLIAM BLAKE.

### How HE CAME TO WRITE “THE LAY OF THE LAST MINSTREL”

*Sir Walter Scott to Miss Seward*

Edinburgh, March 21, 1805.

MY DEAR MISS SEWARD,—

I am truly happy that you found any amusement in the *Lay of the Last Minstrel*. It has great faults, of which no one can be more sensible than I am myself. Above all, it is deficient in that sort of continuity which a story ought to have, and which, were it to be written again, I would endeavour to give it. But I began and wandered forward, like one in a pleasant country, getting to the top of one hill to see a prospect, and to the bottom of another to enjoy a shade ; and what wonder if my course has been devious and desultory, and many of my excursions altogether unprofitable to the advance of my journey ? The Dwarf Page is also an excrescence, and I plead guilty to all the censures concerning him. The truth is, he has a history, and it is this :—The story of Gilpin Horner was told by an old gentleman to Lady Dalkeith, and she, much diverted with his actually believing so grotesque a tale, insisted that I should make it into a Border ballad. I don't know if ever you saw my lovely chieftainess—if you have, you must be aware that it is impossible for any one to refuse her request, and she has more of the angel in face and temper than any one alive ; so that if she had asked me to write a ballad on a broomstick, I must have attempted

it. I began a few verses to be called the Goblin Page ; and they lay long by me, till the applause of some friends whose judgment I valued induced me to resume the poem, so on I wrote, knowing no more than the man in the moon how I was to end. At length the story appeared so uncouth, that I was fain to put it into the mouth of my old minstrel, lest the nature of it should be misunderstood, and I should be suspected of setting up a new school of poetry, instead of a feeble attempt to imitate the old. In the process of the romance, the page, intended to be a principal person in the work, contrived (from the baseness of his natural propensities, I suppose) to slink downstairs into the kitchen, and now he must e'en abide there.

I mention these circumstances to you, and to any one whose applause I value, because I am unwilling you should suspect me of trifling with the public in *malice prepense*. As to the herd of critics, it is impossible for me to pay much attention to them ; for, as they do not understand what I call poetry, we talk in a foreign language to each other. Indeed, many of these gentlemen appear to me to be a sort of tinkers, who, unable to make pots and pans, set up for menders of them, and, God knows, often make two holes in patching one. The sixth canto is altogether redundant ; for the poem should certainly have closed with the union of the lovers, when the interest, if any, at an end. But what could I do ? I had my book and my page still on my hands, and must get of them at all events. Manage them as I would, their catastrophe must have been insufficient to occupy the entire canto ; so I was fain to eke it out with songs of the Minstrels. I will now descend from the confessional, which I think I have occupied long enough for the patience of my fair confessor. I am happy

you are disposed to give me absolution, notwithstanding all my sins.

“MR. H.”

*Charles Lamb to Mr. Manning*

*5th December, 1806.*

Manning, your letter dated Hottentots, August the what-was-it? came to hand. I can scarce hope that mine will have the same luck. China—Canton—bless us—how it strains the imagination and makes it ache! I write under another uncertainty, whether it can go to-morrow by a ship which I have just learned is going off direct to your part of the world, or whether the despatches may not be sealed up and this have to wait, for if it is detained here, it will grow staler in a fortnight than in a five months' voyage coming to you. It will be a point of conscience to send you none but bran-new news (the latest edition), which will but grow the better, like oranges, for a sea voyage. O that you should be so many hemispheres off—if I speak incorrectly you can correct me—why the simplest death or marriage that takes place here must be important to you as news in the old Bastile. There's your friend Tuthill has got away from France—you remember France? and Tuthill?—ten-to-one but I writes by this post, if he don't get my note in time apprising him of the vessel sailing. Know then that he has found means to obtain leave from Buonaparte without making use of any *incredible romantic pretences* as some have done, who never meant to fulfil them, to come home, and I have seen him here and at Holcroft's. An't you glad about Tuthill? No, then be sorry for Holcroft, whose new play, called “The Vindictive Man,” was damned about a fortnight

since. It died in part of its own weakness and in part for being choked up with bad actors. The two principal parts were destined to Mrs. Jordan and Mr. Bannister, but Mrs. J. has not come to terms with the managers, they have had some squabble, and Bannister shot some of his fingers off by the going off of a gun. So Miss Duncan had her part, and Mr. De Camp took his. His part, the principal comic hope of the play, was most unluckily Goldfinch, taken out of the "Road to Ruin," not only the same character, but the identical Goldfinch—the same as Falstaff is in two plays of Shakspere. As the devil of ill-luck would have it, half the audience did not know that H. had written it, but were displeased at his stealing from the "Road to Ruin"; and those who might have borne a gentlemanly coxcomb with his "That's your sort," "Go it"—such as Lewis is—did not relish the intolerable vulgarity and inanity of the idea stript of his manner. De Canip was hooted, more than hissed, hooted and bellowed off the stage before the second act was finished, so that the remainder of his part was forced to be, with some violence to the play, omitted. In addition to this, a woman of the town was another principal character—a most unfortunate choice in this moral day. The audience were as scandalised as if you were to introduce such a personage to their private tea-tables. Besides, her action in the play was gross—wheedling an old man into marriage. But the mortal blunder of the play was that which, oddly enough, H. took part in, and exultingly told me of the night before it came out, that there were no less than eleven principal characters in it, and I believe he meant of the men only, for the playbill exprest as much, not reckoning one woman—and true it was, for Mr. Powell, Mr. Raymond, Mr. Bartlett, Mr. H. Siddons, Mr.

Barrymore, etc., etc.—to the number of eleven, had all parts equally prominent, and there was as much of them in quantity and rank as of the hero and heroine—and most of them gentlemen who seldom appear but as the hero's friend in a farce—for a minute or two—and here they all had their ten-minute speeches and one of them gave the audience a serious account how he was now a lawyer but had been a poet, and then a long enumeration of the inconveniences of authorship, rascally booksellers, reviewers, etc. ; which first set the audience a-gaping ; but I have said enough. You will be so sorry, that you will not think the best of me for my detail ; but news is news at Canton. Poor H. I fear will feel the disappointment very seriously in a pecuniary light. From what I can learn he has saved nothing. You and I were hoping one day that he had, but I fear he has nothing but his pictures and books, and a no very flourishing business, and to be obliged to part with his long-necked Guido that hangs opposite as you enter, and the game-piece that hangs in the back drawing-room, and all those Vandykes, etc. God should temper the wind to the shorn connoisseur. I hope I need not say to you, that I feel for the weather-beaten author, and for all his household. I assure you his fate has soured a good deal the pleasure I should have otherwise taken in my own little farce being accepted, and I hope about to be acted—it is in rehearsal actually, and I expect it to come out next week. It is kept a sort of secret, and the rehearsals have gone on privately, lest by many folks knowing it, the story should come out, which would infallibly damn it. You remember I had sent it before you went. Wroughton read it, and was much pleased with it. I speedily got an answer. I took it to make alterations, and lazily kept it some

months, then took courage and furbished it up in a day or two and took it. In less than a fortnight I heard the principal part was given to Elliston, who liked it and only wanted a prologue, which I have since done and sent, and I had a note the day before yesterday from the manager, Wroughton (bless his fat face—he is not a bad actor in some things), to say that I should be summoned to the rehearsal after the next, which next was to be yesterday. I had no idea it was so forward. I have had no trouble, attended no reading or rehearsal, made no interest ; what a contrast to the usual parade of authors ! But it is peculiar to modesty to do all things without noise or pomp ! I have some suspicion it will appear in public on Wednesday next, for W. says in his note, it is so forward that if wanted it may come out next week, and a new melo-drame is announced for every day till then ; and “a new farce is in rehearsal,” is put up in the bills. Now you’d like to know the subject. The title is “Mr. H.” no more ; how simple, how taking ! A great H. sprawling over the playbill and attracting eyes at every corner. The story is a coxcomb appearing at Bath, vastly rich—all the ladies dying for him—all bursting to know who he is—but he goes by no other name than Mr. H.—a curiosity like that of the dames of Strasburg about the man with the great nose. But I won’t tell you any more about it. Yes, I will : but I can’t give you an idea how I have done it. I’ll just tell you that after much vehement admiration, when his true name comes out, “Hogsflesh,” all the women shun him, avoid him, and not one can be found to change their name for him—that’s the idea—how flat it is here—but how whimsical in the farce ! and only think how hard upon me it is that the ship is despatched to-morrow, and

my triumph cannot be ascertained till the Wednesday after—but all China will ring of it by and by. N.B. (but this is a secret).—The Professor has got a tragedy coming out with the young Roscius in it in January next, as we say—January last it will be with you—and though it is a profound secret now, as all his affairs are, it cannot be much of one by the time you read this. However, don't let it go any further. I understand there are dramatic exhibitions in China. One would not like to be forestalled. Do you find in all this stuff I have written anything like those feelings which one should send my old adventuring friend, that is gone to wander among Tartars and may never come again? I don't—but your going away, and all about you, is a thread-bare topic. I have worn it out with thinking—it has come to me when I have been dull with anything, till my sadness has seemed more to have come from it than to have introduced it. I want you, you don't know how much—but if I had you here in my European garret, we should but talk over such stuff as I have written—so—Those “Tales from Shakspere” are near coming out, and Mary has begun a new work. Mr. Dawe is turned author, he has been in such a way lately—Dawe, the painter, I mean—he sits and stands about at Holcroft's and says nothing—then sighs and leans his head on his hand. I took him to be in love—but it seems he was only meditating a work, “The Life of Morland”: the young man is not used to composition. Rickman and Captain Burney are well; they assemble at my house pretty regularly of a Wednesday—a new institution. Like other great men I have a public day, cribbage and pipes, with Phillips and noisy —.

Good Heaven! what a bit only I've got left!

How shall I squeeze all I know into this morsel ! Cole-ridge is come home, and is going to turn lecturer on taste at the Royal Institution. I shall get £200 from the theatre if "Mr. H." has a good run, and I hope £100 for the copyright. Nothing if it fails ; and there never was a more ticklish thing. The whole depends on the manner in which the name is brought out, which I value myself on, as a *chef d'œuvre*. How the paper grows less and less. In less than two minutes I shall cease to talk to you, and you may rave to the Great Wall of China. N.B.—Is there such a wall ! Is it as big as Old London Wall, by Bedlam ? Have you met with a friend of mine, named Ball, at Canton ? —if you are acquainted, remember me kindly to him. N.B.—If my little thing don't succeed,<sup>1</sup> I shall easily survive, having, as it were compared to H.'s venture, but a sixteenth in the lottery. Mary and I are to sit next the orchestra in the pit, next the tweedle-dees. She remembers you. You are more to us than five hundred farces, clappings, etc.

Come back one day.

C. LAMB.

<sup>1</sup> Wednesday, 10th December, 1806, "Mr. H." was produced upon the boards of Drury Lane. Talfourd, describing its reception, writes, "At first it was much applauded ; but the wit seemed wire-drawn ; and when the curtain fell on the first act, the friends of the author began to fear. The second act dragged heavily on, as second acts of farces will do ; a rout at Bath, people with ill-dressed and over-dressed actors and actresses, increased the disposition to yawn ; and when the moment of disclosure came, and nothing worse than the name *Hogsflesh* was heard, the audience resented the long play on their curiosity, and would hear no more. Lamb, with his sister, sat, as he anticipated, in the front of the pit, and having joined in encoring the epilogue, the brilliancy of which injured the farce, he gave way with equal pliancy to the common feeling, and hissed and hooted as loudly as any of his neighbours."

## TIST AND HIS ART

### ON HIS TUMBLE IN DRURY LANE

*Wes Lamb to Mr. Manning*

26th February, 1808.

— creeping on since I was lamed with that fall from the top of Drury Lane Theatre into it, something more than a year ago.<sup>1</sup> However, I've been free of the house ever since, and the house is pretty free with me upon that occasion. Hang 'm, how they hissed ! it was not a hiss neither, but a sort of a frantic yell, like a congregation of mad geese, with roaring something like bears, mows and mops like apes, sometimes snakes, that hiss'd me into madness. 'Twas like St. Anthony's temptations. Mercy on us, that God should give His favourite children, men, mouths to speak with, to discourse rationally, to promise smoothly, to flatter agreeably, to encourage warmly, to counsel wisely, to sing with, to drink with, and to kiss with, and that they should turn them into mouths of adders, bears, wolves, hyenas, and whistle like tempests, and emit breath through them like distillations of aspic poison, to asperse and vilify the innocent labours of their fellow-creatures who are desirous to please them ! Heaven be pleased to make the teeth rot out of them all, therefor ! Make them a reproach, and all that pass by them to loll out their tongue at them ! Blind mouths ! as Milton somewhere calls them.

<sup>1</sup> The disastrous performance of "Mr. H."

## CHARLES L

### ELIA PAINTS FOR A QUAKER FRIEND LIVING BY LITERATURE

*Charles Lamb to Bernard Barton*

*January*

Throw yourself on the world without any plan of support, beyond what the chance employment of booksellers would afford you !

Throw yourself rather, my dear sir, from the stony Tarpeian rock, slap-dash headlong upon iron spike. If you have but five consolatory minutes between the desk and the bed, make much of them, and live a century in them, rather than turn slave to the booksellers. They are Turks and Tartars when they have poor authors at their beck. Hitherto you have been at arm's length from them. Come not within their grasp. I have known many authors want for bread, some repining, others enjoying the blessed security of a spunging-house, all agreeing they had rather have been tailors, weavers-what-not ? rather than the things they were. I have known some starved, some to go mad, one dear friend literally dying in a workhouse. You know not what a rapacious set these booksellers are. Ask even Southey, who (a single case almost) has made a fortune by book drudgery, what he has found them. O you know not, may you never know, the miseries of subsisting by authorship. 'Tis a pretty appendage to a situation like yours or mine ; but a slavery, worse than all slavery, to be a bookseller's dependant, to drudge your brains for pots of ale, and

<sup>1</sup> Bernard Barton (1784-1849), the Quaker poet of Woodbridge, who was at this time thinking of forsaking the bank-clerkship which he held in favour of authorship. Charles Lamb dissuaded him. He remained a bank-clerk until within two days of his death.

## I AND HIS ART

change your FREE THOUGHTS

NUMBERS for ungracious TASK-

booksellers hate us. The reason I  
am contrary to other trades, in which the  
bookseller all the credit (a jeweller or silversmith  
for instance), and the journeyman, who really does  
the work, is in the back-ground ; in our work the  
bookseller gives all the credit to us, whom they consider  
as their journeymen, and therefore do they hate us,  
and cheat us, and oppress us, and would wring the  
blood of us out, to put another sixpence in their  
mechanic pouches.

\*       \*       \*       \*       \*

Keep to your bank, and the bank will keep you. Trust not to the public ; you may hang, starve, drown yourself for anything that worthy personage cares. I bless every star, that Providence, not seeing good to make me independent, has seen it next good to settle upon me the stable foundation of Leadenhall.<sup>1</sup> Sit down, good B.B., in the banking-office ; what ! is there not from six to eleven, P.M. six days in the week, and is there not all Sunday ? Fie, what a superfluity of man's time, if you could think so ! Enough for relaxation, mirth, converse, poetry, good thoughts, quiet thoughts. Oh, the corroding, torturing, tormenting thoughts that disturb the brain of the unlucky wight, who must draw upon it for daily sustenance ! Henceforth I retract all my fond complaints of mercantile employment ; look upon them as lovers' quarrels. I was but half in earnest. Welcome dead timber of the desk, that gives me life. A little grumbling is a wholesome medicine for the spleen, but in my inner heart do I approve and embrace this our close, but unharassing way of life. I am

<sup>1</sup> The East India House, where Charles Lamb was employed.

quite serious. If you can send me *Fox*, I will not keep it six weeks, and will return it, with warm thanks to yourself and friend, without blot or dog's-ear.

Yours truly  
C. LAMB.

### SNEERING AT THE BRITISH PUBLIC

*Lord Byron to John Murray*

Venice, April 6, 1819.

I mean to write my best work in Italian, and it will take me nine years more thoroughly to master the Language ; and then, if my fancy exist, and I exist too, I will try what I *can do really*. As to the estimation of the English which you talk of, let them calculate what it is worth before they insult me with their insolent condescension.

I have not written for their pleasure. If they are pleased, it is that they choose to be so ; I have never flattered their opinions, nor their pride ; nor will I. Neither will I make “Ladies” books : *al dilettar le femine e la plebe*. I have written from the fulness of my mind, from passion, from impulse, from many motives, but not for their “sweet voices.”

I know the precise worth of popular applause, for few scribblers have had more of it ; and if I chose to swerve into their paths, I could retain it, or resume it. But I neither love ye nor fear ye ; and though I buy with ye, and sell with ye, and talk with ye, I will neither eat with ye, drink with ye, nor pray with ye. They made me, without my search, a species of popular idol ; they, without reason or judgment, beyond the caprice of their good pleasure, threw down the image from its pedestal ; it was not broken with the fall, and they would, it seems, again replace it,—but they shall not.

## CONFIDENT OF HIS FUTURE FAME

*William Wordsworth to Lady Beaumont*

Coleorton, May 21, 1807.

MY DEAR LADY BEAUMONT,—

Though I am to see you so soon, I cannot but write a word or two, to thank you for the interest you take in my poems, as evinced by your solicitude about their immediate reception. I write partly to thank you for this, and to express the pleasure it has given me, and partly to remove any uneasiness from your mind which the disappointments you sometimes meet with, in this labour of love, may occasion. I see that you have many battles to fight for me—more than, in the ardour and confidence of your pure and elevated mind, you have ever thought of being summoned to ; but be assured that this opposition is nothing more than what I distinctly foresaw that you and my other friends would have to encounter. I say this, not to give myself credit for an eye of prophecy, but to allay any vexatious thoughts on my account which this opposition may have produced in you.

It is impossible that any expectations can be lower than mine concerning the immediate effect of this little work upon what is called the public. I do not here take into consideration that envy and malevolence, and all the bad passions which always stand in the way of a work of any merit from a living poet ; but merely think of the pure, absolute, honest ignorance, in which all worldlings of every rank and situation must be enveloped, with respect to the thoughts, feelings and images on which the life of my poems depend. The things which I have taken, whether from within or without, what have they to do with routs, dinners, morning calls, hurry from door to door, from street to

street, on foot or in carriage ; with Mr. Pitt or Mr. Fox, Mr. Paul or Sir Francis Burdett, the Westminster election or the borough of Honiton ? In a word—for I cannot stop to make my way through the hurry of images that present themselves to me—what have they to do with the endless talking about things nobody cares anything for except as far as their own vanity is concerned ?—what have they to do (to say all at once) with a life without love ? In such a life there can be no thought ; for we have no thought (save thoughts of pain) but as far as we have love and admiration.

It is an awful truth, that there neither is, nor can be, any genuine enjoyment of poetry among nineteen out of the twenty of those persons who live, or wish to live, in the broad light of the world—among those who either are, or are striving to make themselves, people of consideration in society. This is a truth, and an awful one, because to be incapable of a feeling of poetry, in my sense of the word, is to be without love of human nature and reverence for God.

Upon this I shall insist elsewhere ; at present let me confine myself to my object ; which is to make you, my dear friend, as easy-hearted as myself with respect to these poems. Trouble not yourself upon their present reception ; of what moment is that compared with what I trust is their destiny ?—to console the afflicted ; to add sunshine to daylight, by making the happy happier ; to teach the young and the gracious of every age to see, to think, and feel, and, therefore, to become more actively and securely virtuous ; this is their office, which I trust they will faithfully perform, long after we (that is, all that is mortal to us) are mouldered in our graves. I am well aware how far it would seem to many I overrate my own exertions, when

I speak in this way, in direct connexion with the volume which I have just made public.

I am not, however, afraid of such censure, insignificant as probably the majority of those poems would appear to very respectable persons. I do not mean London wits and witlings, for these have too many foul passions about them to be respectable, even if they had more intellect than the benign laws of Providence will allow to such a heartless existence as theirs is ; but grave, kindly-natured, worthy persons, who would be pleased if they could. I hope that these volumes are not without some recommendations, even for readers of this class : but their imagination has slept ; and the voice which is the voice of the poetry, without imagination, cannot be heard. . . .

My letter (as this second sheet, which I am obliged to take, admonished me) is growing to an enormous length ; and yet, saving that I have expressed my calm confidence that these poems will live, I have said nothing which has a particular application to the object of it, which was to remove all disquiet from your mind on account of the condemnation they may at present incur from the portion of my contemporaries who are called the public. I am sure, my dear Lady Beaumont, if you attach any importance to it, it can only be from an apprehension that it may affect me, upon which I have already set you at ease ; or from a fear that this present blame is ominous of their future or final destiny. If this be the case, your tenderness for me betrays you. Be assured that the decision of these persons has nothing to do with the question ; they are altogether incompetent judges. These people in the senseless hurry of their idle lives, do not *read* books, they merely snatch a glance at them that they may talk about them. And even if it were not so, never forget

what, I believe, was observed to you by Coleridge, that every great and original writer, in proportion as he is great or original, must himself create the taste by which he is to be relished ; he must teach the art by which he is to be seen ; this, in a certain degree, even to all persons, however wise and pure may be their lives, and however uninitiated their taste. But for those who dip into books in order to give an opinion of them, or talk about them to take up an opinion—for this multitude of unhappy and misguided, and misguiding beings, an entire regeneration must be produced ; and if this be possible, it must be a work of time. To conclude, my ears are stone-dead to this idle buzz, and my flesh as insensible as iron to these petty stings ; and, after what I have said, I am sure yours will be the same. I doubt not that you will share with me an invincible confidence that my writings (and among them these little poems) will co-operate with the benign tendencies in human nature and society, wherever found ; and that they will in their degree, be efficacious in making men wiser, better, and happier. Farewell. I will not apologize for this letter, though its length demands an apology. Believe me, eagerly wishing for the happy day when I shall see you and Sir George here,

Most affectionately yours,  
W. WORDSWORTH.

#### ENGLAND'S GREATEST LYRIC POET EXPLAINS HIS ART

*John Keats to John Taylor*

Hampstead

27 February [1818].

In poetry I have a few axioms, and you will see how far I am from their centre.

1st. I think poetry should surprise by a fine excess, and not by singularity ; it should strike the reader as a wording of his own highest thoughts, and appear almost a remembrance.

2nd. Its touches of beauty should never be half-way, thereby making the reader breathless, instead of content. The rise, the progress, the setting of Imagery should, like the sun, come natural to him, shine over him, and set soberly, although in magnificence, leaving him in the luxury of twilight. But it is easier to think what poetry should be, than to write it. And this leads me to

Another axiom—That if poetry comes not as naturally as the leaves to a tree, it had better not come at all.—However it may be with me, I cannot help looking into new countries with “O for a muse of Fire to ascend ! ” If “Endymion” serves me as a pioneer, perhaps I ought to be content—I have great reason to be content, for thank God I can read, and perhaps understand Shakespeare to his depths ; and I have I am sure many friends, who, if I fail, will attribute any change in my life and temper to humbleness rather than pride—to a cowering under the wings of great poets, rather than to a bitterness that I am not appreciated. I am anxious to get “Endymion” printed that I may forget it and proceed.

#### THE PLEASURES OF LITERATURE AND STATE-CRAFT COMPARED

*Lord Macaulay to Thomas Flower Ellis*

Calcutta, December 30, 1835.

I am in excellent health. So are my sister and brother-in-law, and their little girl, whom I am always nursing ; and of whom I am becoming fonder than a

wise man, with half my experience, would choose to be of anything except himself. I have but very lately begun to recover my spirits. The tremendous blow which fell on me at the beginning of this year has left marks behind it which I shall carry to my grave. Literature has saved my life and my reason. Even now, I dare not, in the intervals of business, remain alone for a minute without a book in my hand. What my course of life will be, when I return to England, is very doubtful. But I am more than half determined to abandon politics, and to give myself wholly to letters ; to undertake some great historical work <sup>1</sup> which may be at once the business and the amusement of my life ; and to leave the pleasures of pestiferous rooms, sleepless nights, aching heads, and diseased stomachs to Roebuck and to Praed.

In England I might probably be of a very different opinion. But, in the quiet of my own little grass-plot,—when the moon, at its rising, finds me with the Philoctetes or the *De Finibus* in my hand,—I often wonder what strange infatuation leads men who can do something better to squander their intellect, their health, their energy, on such subjects as those which most statesmen are engaged in pursuing. I comprehend perfectly how a man who can debate, but who would make a very indifferent figure as a contributor to an annual or a magazine,—such a man as Stanley, for example,—should take the only line by which he can attain distinction. But that a man before whom the two paths of literature and politics lie open, and who might hope for eminence in either, should choose politics, and quit literature, seems to me madness. On the one side is health, leisure, peace of mind, the

<sup>1</sup> *The History of England from the Accession of James the Second.*

search after truth, and all the enjoyments of friendship and conversation. On the other side is almost certain ruin to the constitution, constant labour, constant anxiety. Every friendship which a man may have, becomes precarious as soon as he engages in politics. As to abuse, men soon become callous to it, but the discipline which makes them callous is very severe. And for what is it that a man who might, if he chose, rise and lie down at his own hour, engage in any study, enjoy any amusement, and visit any place, consents to make himself as much a prisoner as if he were within the rules of the Fleet ; to be tethered during eleven months of the year within the circle of half a mile round Charing Cross ; to sit, or stand, night after night for ten or twelve hours, inhaling a noisome atmosphere, and listening to harangues of which nine-tenths are far below the level of a leading article in a newspaper ? For what is it that he submits, day after day, to see the morning break over the Thames, and then totters home, with bursting temples, to his bed ? Is it for fame ? Who would compare the fame of Charles Townshend to that of Hume, that of Lord North to that of Gibbon, that of Lord Chatham to that of Johnson ? Who can look back on the life of Burke and not regret that the years which he passed in ruining his health and temper by political exertions were not passed in the composition of some great and durable work ? Who can read the letters to Atticus, and not feel that Cicero would have been an infinitely happier and better man, and a not less celebrated man, if he had left us fewer speeches, and more Academic Questions and Tusculan Disputations ; if he had passed the time which he spent in brawling with Vatinius and Clodius in producing a history of Rome superior even to that of Livy ? But these, as I said, are medita-

tions, in a quiet garden, situated far beyond the contagious influence of English faction. What I might feel if I again saw Downing Street and Palace Yard is another question. I tell you sincerely my present feelings.

I have cast up my reading account, and brought it to the end of the year 1835. It includes December 1834; for I came into my house and unpacked my books at the end of November 1834. During the last thirteen months I have read Æschylus twice; Sophocles twice; Euripides once; Pindar twice; Callimachus; Apollonius Rhodius; Quintus Calaber; Theocritus twice; Herodotus; Thucydides; almost all Xenophon's works; almost all Plato; Aristotle's *Politics*, and a good deal of his *Organon*, besides dipping elsewhere in him; the whole of Plutarch's *Lives*; about half of Lucian; two or three books of Athenæus; Plautus twice; Terence twice; Lucretius twice; Catullus; Libullus; Propertius; Lucan; Statius; Silius Italicus; Livy; Velleius Paterculus; Sallust; Cæsar; and, lastly, Cicero. I have, indeed, still a little of Cicero left; but I shall finish him in a few days. I am now deep in Aristophanes and Lucian. Of Aristophanes I think as I always thought; but Lucian has agreeably surprised me. At school I read some of his *Dialogues of the Dead* when I was thirteen; and, to my shame, I never, to the best of my belief read a line of him since. I am charmed with him. His style seems to me to be superior to that of any extant writer who lived later than the age of Demosthenes and Theophrastus. He has a most peculiar and delicious vein of humour. It is not the humour of Aristophanes; it is not that of Plato: and yet is akin to both;—not quite equal, I admit, to either, but still exceedingly charming. I hardly know where to find an instance of a writer, in

the decline of a literature, who had shown an invention so rich, and a taste so pure. But, if I get on these matters, I shall fill sheet after sheet. They must wait till we take another long walk, or another tavern dinner, together ; that is, till the summer of 1838.

### AGONISING OVER CROMWELL'S LETTERS

*Thomas Carlyle to John Sterling*

Chelsea, December 4, 1843.

I am very miserable at present ; or call it heavy-laden with fruitless toil, which will have much the same meaning. My abode is, and has been, figuratively speaking, in the centre of chaos. Onwards there is no moving in any yet discovered line, and where I am is no abiding—miserable enough.

The fact is, without any figure, I am doomed to write some book about that unblessed Commonwealth, and as yet there will no book show itself possible. The whole stagnancy of the English genius two hundred years thick lies heavy on me. Dead heroes buried under two centuries of Atheism seem to whimper pitifully “Deliver us ! Canst thou not deliver us ?” And alas ! what am I, or what is my father’s house ? Confound it ! I have lost four years of good labour in the business ; and still the more I depend on it, it is like throwing good labour after bad. On the whole, you ought to pity me. Is thy servant a dead dog that these things have fallen on him ? My only consolation is that I am struggling to be the most conservative man in England, or one of the most conservative. If the past times, only two centuries back, lie wholly a torpedo darkness and dulness, freezing as with Medusa glance all souls of men that look on it, where are our foundations gone ? If the past time cannot become *melodious*,

it must be forgotten, as good as annihilated ; and we rove like aimless exiles that *have* no ancestors, whose world began only yesterday. That must be my consolation, such as it is.

I see almost nobody. I avoid sight rather, and study to consume my own smoke. I wish among your buildings you would build me some small Prophet's chamber, fifteen feet square, with a separate garret and a flue for smoking, within a furlong of your big house, sacred from all noises of dogs, cocks, pianofortes, insipid men, engaging some dumb old woman to light a fire for me daily and boil some kind of kettle.

#### UTTERING HIS HEART ABOUT THE PUBLIC—AND SOME OTHER THINGS BESIDE

*Robert Louis Stevenson to Edmund Gosse*

Skerryvore, Bournemouth, *Jan. 2nd, 1886.*

That is the hard part of literature. You aim high, and you take longer over your work, and it will not be so successful as if you had aimed low and rushed it. What the public likes is work (of any kind) a little loosely executed ; so long as it is a little wordy, a little slack, a little dim and knotless, the dear public likes it ; it should (if possible) be a little dull into the bargain. I know that good work sometimes hits ; but, with my hand on my heart, I think it is by an accident. And I know also that good work must succeed at last ; but that is not the doing of the public ; they are only shamed into silence or affectation. I do not write for the public ; I do write for money, a nobler deity ; and most of all for myself, not perhaps any more noble, but both more intelligent and nearer home.

Let us tell each other sad stories of the bestiality of

the beasts whom we feed. What he likes is the newspaper ; and to me the press is the mouth of a sewer, where lying is professed as from an university chair, and everything prurient, and ignoble, and essentially dull, finds its abode and pulpit. I do not like mankind ; but men, and not all of these—and fewer women. As for respecting the race, and, above all, that fatuous rabble of burgesses called “the public,” God save me from such irreligion !—that way lies disgrace and dishonour. There must be something wrong in me, or I would not be popular.

This is perhaps a trifle stronger than my sedate and permanent opinion. Not much, I think. As for the art that we practise, I have never been able to see why its professors should be respected. They chose the primrose path ; when they found it was not all primroses, but some of it brambly, and much of it uphill, they began to think and to speak of themselves as holy martyrs. But a man is never martyred in any honest sense in the pursuit of his pleasure ; and *delirium tremens* has more of the honour of the cross. We were full of the pride of life, and chose, like prostitutes, to live by a pleasure. We should be paid if we give the pleasure we pretend to give ; but why should we be honoured ?

I hope some day you and Mrs. Gosse will come for a Sunday ; but we must wait till I am able to see people. I am very full of Jenkin’s life ; it is painful, yet very pleasant, to dig into the past of a dead friend, and find him, at every spadeful, shine brighter. I own, as I read, I wonder more and more why he should have taken me to be a friend. He had many and obvious faults upon the face of him ; the heart was pure gold. I feel it little pain to have lost him, for it is a loss in which I cannot believe ; I take

it, against reason, for an absence ; if not to-day, then to-morrow, I still fancy I shall see him in the door ; and then, now when I know him better, how glad a meeting ! Yes, if I could believe in the immortality business, the world would indeed be too good to be true ; but we were put here to do what service we can, for honour and not for hire ; the sods cover us, and the worm that never dies, the conscience, sleeps well at last ; these are the wages, besides what we receive so lavishly day by day ; and they are enough for a man who knows his own frailty and sees all things in the proportion of reality. The soul of piety was killed long ago by that idea of reward. Nor is happiness, whether eternal or temporal, the reward that mankind seeks. Happinesses are but his wayside campings ; his soul is in the journey ; he was born for the struggle, and only tastes his life in effort and on the condition that he is opposed. How, then, is such a creature, so fiery, so pugnacious, so made up of discontent and aspiration, and such noble and uneasy passions—how can he be rewarded but by rest ? I would not say it aloud ; for man's cherished belief is that he loves that happiness which he continually spurns and passes by ; and this belief in some ulterior happiness exactly fits him. He does not require to stop and taste it ; he can be about the rugged and bitter business where his heart lies ; and yet he can tell himself this fairy tale of an eternal tea-party, and enjoy the notion that he is both himself and something else ; and that his friends will yet meet him, all ironed out and emasculate, and still be lovable,—as if love did not live in the faults of the beloved only, and draw its breath in an unbroken round of forgiveness ! But the truth is, we must fight until we die ; and when we die there can be no quiet for mankind but complete resumption into—

what? God, let us say—when all these desperate tricks will lie spell-bound at last.

Here came my dinner and cut this sermon short—*excusez.*

R. L. S.

VI

Literary Verdicts

Boswell's Life of Johnson.

*Horace Walpole (1717-1797)*

He admires in Dryden his ardour and impetuosity of mind.

*William Wordsworth (1770-1850)*

Defoe's novels are capital kitchen-reading, and worthy to find a shelf in the libraries of the most learned.

*Charles Lamb (1775-1835)*

Wordsworth as compared with Milton.

*John Keats (1795-1821)*

A verdict upon the literature of his own age.

*Thomas De Quincey (1785-1859)*

Congratulating Dickens on "The Christmas Carol."

*Francis Jeffrey (1773-1850)*

A lady's opinion of Lord Byron.

*Miss Mitford (1789-1855)*

Byron beyond Wordsworth and Keats beyond them all.

*Benjamin Robert Haydon (1786-1846)*

He returns to his classics and finds in them solace for grief.

*Lord Macaulay (1800-1859)*

Wherein Plato is re-discovered and a German professor condemned.

*Lord Macaulay (1800-1859)*

"The grand heroic spirit—that trumpet-stop on his organ."

*Charles Lever (1806-1872)*

Those inimitable Dickens touches.

*William Makepeace Thackeray (1811-1863)*

He revolts against Asceticism.

*William Makepeace Thackeray (1811-1863)*

A woman and her hero.

*Charlotte Brontë (1816-1855)*

The Chinese fidelity and miniature delicacy of Jane Austen.

*Charlotte Brontë (1816-1855)*

Measuring character by a man's favourite poets.

*Frederick W. Robertson (1816-1853)*

"What I admire in Shakespeare is that his loves are all human."

*Frederick W. Robertson (1816-1853)*

"Shakspeare paints Man instead of writing moral tales."

*Frederick W. Robertson (1816-1853)*

Benvenuto Cellini, goldsmith, visionary, maniac.

*Frederick W. Robertson (1816-1853)*

The new novelists contrasted with the old.

*Frederick W. Robertson (1816-1853)*

"The fault of all German culture and the weakness of all German genius."

*Sidney Lanier (1842-1881)*

## BOSWELL'S LIFE OF JOHNSON

*Horace Walpole to Miss Berry*

Berkeley Square, May 26, 1791.

The rest of my letter must be literary ; for we have no news. Boswell's book is gossiping, but, having numbers of proper names, would be more readable, at least by me, were it reduced from two volumes to one : but there are woful *longuers*, both about his hero and himself, the *fidus Achates* ; about whom one has not the smallest curiosity. But I wrong the original Achates ; one is satisfied with his fidelity in keeping his master's secrets and weaknesses, which modern led-captains betray for their patron's glory and to hurt their own enemies ; which Boswell has done shamefully, particularly against Mrs. Piozzi, and Mrs. Montagu, and Bishop Percy. Dr. Blagden says justly, that it is a new kind of libel, by which you may abuse anybody, by saying some dead person said so and so of somebody alive. Often, indeed, Johnson made the most brutal speeches to living persons ; for though he was good-natured at bottom, he was very ill-natured at top. He loved to dispute, to show his superiority. If his opponents were weak, he told them they were fools ; if they vanquished him, he was scurrilous—to nobody more than to Boswell himself, who was contemptible for flattering him so grossly, and for enduring the coarse things he was continually vomiting on Boswell's own country, Scotland. I expected, amongst the

excommunicated, to find myself, but am very gently treated. I never would be in the least acquainted with Johnson ; or, as Boswell calls it, I had not a just value for him ; which the biographer imputes to my resentment for the doctor's putting bad arguments (purposely, out of Jacobitism) into the speeches which he wrote fifty years ago for my father, in the *Gentleman's Magazine* ; which I did not read then, or ever knew Johnson wrote till Johnson died, nor have looked at since. Johnson's blind Toryism and known brutality kept me aloof ; nor did I ever exchange a syllable with him ; nay, I do not think I ever was in the room with him six times in my days. Boswell came to me, said Dr. Johnson was writing the *Lives of the Poets*, and wished I would give him anecdotes of Mr. Gray. I said, very coldly, I had given what I knew to Mr. Mason. Boswell hummed and hawed and then dropped, "I suppose you know Dr. Johnson does not admire Mr. Gray." Putting as much contempt as I could into my look and tone, I said, "Dr. Johnson don't !—hump !"—and with that monosyllable ended our interview. After the doctor's death, Burke, Sir Joshua Reynolds, and Boswell sent an ambling circular-letter to me, begging subscriptions for a monument for him—the two last I think, impertinently ; as they could not but know my opinion, and could not suppose I would contribute to a monument for one who had endeavoured, poor soul ! to degrade my friend's superlative poetry. I would not deign to write an answer ; but sent down word by my footman, as I would have done to parish officers with a brief, that I would not subscribe. In the two new volumes Johnson says, and very probably did, or is made to say, that Gray's poetry is *dull*, and that he was a *dull* man ! The same oracle dislikes Prior, Swift, and Fielding. If an

elephant could write a book, perhaps one that had read a great deal would say, that an Arabian horse is a very clumsy, ungraceful animal. Pass to a better chapter.

HE ADMires IN DRYDEN HIS ARDOUR AND IMPETUOSITY OF MIND

*William Wordsworth to Sir Walter Scott*

Patterdale, November 7, 1805.

MY DEAR SCOTT,—

I was much pleased to hear of your engagement with Dryden; not that he is, as a poet, any great favourite of mine. I admire his talents and genius highly; but his is not a poetical genius. The only qualities I can find in Dryden that are *essentially* poetical, are a certain ardour and impetuosity of mind, with an excellent ear. It may seem strange that I do not add to this, great command of language: *that* he certainly has, and of such language, too, as it is most desirable that a poet should possess, or rather that he should not be without. But it is not language that is, in the highest sense of the word, poetical, being neither of the imagination nor of the passions; I mean the amiable, the ennobling, or the intense passions. I do not mean to say that there is nothing of this in Dryden, but as little, I think, as is possible, considering how much he has written. You will easily understand my meaning, when I refer to his versification of Palamon and Arcite, as contrasted with the language of Chaucer. Dryden had neither a tender heart nor a lofty sense of moral dignity. Whenever his language is poetically impassioned, it is mostly upon unpleasing subjects, such as the follies, vices, and crimes of classes of men or of individuals. That his cannot be the language of imagination, must have necessarily followed

from this—that there is not a single image from nature in the whole body of his work ; and in his translation from Virgil, whenever Virgil can be fairly said to have had his *eye* upon his object, Dryden always spoils the passage.

DEFOE'S NOVELS ARE CAPITAL KITCHEN-READING, AND  
WORTHY TO FIND A SHELF IN THE LIBRARIES OF  
THE MOST LEARNED

*Charles Lamb to Mr. Walter Wilson*

“ E. I. H., 16th December, 1822.

DEAR WILSON,—*Lightning*, I was going to call you. You must have thought me negligent in not answering your letter sooner. But I have a habit of never writing letters but at the office ; 'tis so much time cribbed out of the Company ; and I am but just got out of the thick of a tea-sale, in which most of the entry of notes, despositos, &c., usually falls to my share.

I have nothing of De Foe's but two or three novels, and the “ Plague History.” I can give you no information about him. As a slight general character of what I remember of them (for I have not look'd into them latterly), I would say that in the appearance of *truth*, in all the incidents and conversations that occur in them, they exceed any works of fiction I am acquainted with. It is perfect illusion. The *author* never appears in these self-narratives (for so they ought to be called), or rather auto-biographies, but the *narrator* chains us down to an implicit belief in everything he says. There is all the minute detail of a log-book in it. Dates are painfully pressed upon the memory. Facts are repeated over and over in varying phrases, till you cannot choose but believe them. It is like reading evidence given in a court of justice.

So anxious the story-teller seems that the truth should be clearly comprehended, that when he has told us a matter-of-fact, or a motive, in a line or two farther down he *repeats* it, with his favourite figure of speech, "I say," so and so, though he had made it abundantly plain before. This is in imitation of the common people's way of speaking, or rather of the way in which they are addressed by a master or mistress, who wishes to impress something upon their memories, and has a wonderful effect upon matter-of-fact readers. Indeed, it is to such principally that he writes. His style is everywhere beautiful, but plain and *homely*. *Robinson Crusoe* is delightful to all ranks and classes, but it is easy to see that it is written in phraseology peculiarly adapted to the lower conditions of readers; hence it is an especial favourite with seafaring men, poor boys, servant-maids, &c. His novels are capable kitchen-reading, while they are worthy, from their deep interest, to find a shelf in the libraries of the wealthiest, and the most learned. His passion for *matter-of-fact narrative* sometimes betrayed him into a long relation of common incidents, which might happen to any man, and have no interest but the intense appearance of truth in them, to recommend them. The whole latter half or two-thirds of "Colonel Jack" is of this description. The beginning of "Colonel Jack" is the most affecting natural picture of a young thief that was ever drawn. His losing the stolen money in the hollow of a tree, and finding it again when he was in despair, and then being in equal distress at not knowing how to dispose of it, and several similar touches in the early history of the Colonel, evince a deep knowledge of human nature; and putting out of question the superior *romantic* interest of the latter, in my mind very much

exceed Crusoe. ‘Roxana’ (first edition) is the next in interest, though he left out the best part of it in subsequent editions from a foolish hypercriticism of his friend Southerne. But “Moll Flanders,” the “Account of the Plague,” &c., are all of one family, and have the same stamp of character. Believe me, with friendly recollections, *Brother* (as I used to call you),

Yours,

C. LAMB.

#### WORDSWORTH AS COMPARED WITH MILTON

*John Keats to John Hamilton Reynolds*

Teignmouth, 3 May [1818].

I will return to Wordsworth—whether or no he has an extended vision or a circumscribed grandeur—whether he is an eagle in his nest or on the wing. And to be more explicit and to show you how tall I stand by the giant, I will put down a simile of human life as far as I now perceive it; that is, to the point to which I say we both have arrived at. Well—I compare human life to a large Mansion of many apartments, two of which I can only describe, the doors of the rest being as yet shut upon me. The first we step into we call the Infant, or Thoughtless Chamber, in which we remain as long as we do not think. We remain there a long while, and notwithstanding the doors of the second Chamber remain wide open, showing a bright appearance, we care not to hasten to it; but are at length imperceptibly impelled by the awakening of the thinking principle within us—we no sooner get into the second Chamber, which I shall call the Chamber of Maiden-Thought, than we become intoxicated with the light and the atmosphere, we see nothing but pleasant wonders, and think of delaying there for ever

in delight. However among the effects this breathing is father of is that tremendous one of sharpening one's vision into the heart and nature of Man—of convincing one's nerves that the world is full of Misery and Heartbreak, Pain, Sickness and Oppression—whereby this Chamber of Maiden-Thought becomes gradually darkened, and at the same time, on all sides of it, many doors are set open—but all dark—all leading to dark passages. We see not the balance of good and evil ; we are in a mist, *we* are now in that state, we feel the “Burden of the Mystery.” To this point was Wordsworth come, as far as I can conceive, when he wrote “Tintern Abbey,” and it seems to me that his genius is explorative of those dark Passages. Now if we live, and go on thinking, we too shall explore them. He is a genius and superior to us, in so far as he can, more than we, make discoveries and shed a light in them. Here I must think Wordsworth is deeper than Milton, though I think it has depended more upon the general and gregarious advance of intellect, than individual greatness of Mind. From the *Paradise Lost* and the other Works of Milton, I hope it is not too presuming, even between ourselves, to say, that his Philosophy, human and divine, may be tolerably understood by one not much advanced in years. In his time Englishmen were just emancipated from a great superstition, and Men had got hold of certain points and resting-places in reasoning which were too newly born to be doubted, and too much opposed by the Mass of Europe not to be thought ethereal and authentically divine—Who could gainsay his ideas on virtue, vice, and Chastity in *Comus* just at the time of the dismissal of Cod-pieces and a hundred other disgraces ? who would not rest satisfied with his hintings at good and evil in the *Paradise Lost*, when just free from the

Inquisition and burning in Smithfield ? The Reformation produced such immediate and great benefits, that Protestantism was considered under the immediate eye of heaven, and its own remaining dogmas and superstitions then, as it were, regenerated, constituted those resting-places and other sure points of Reasoning—from that I have mentioned, Milton, whatever he may have thought in the sequel, appears to have been content with these by his writings. He did not think into the human heart as Wordsworth has done. Yet Milton as a Philosopher had sure as great powers as Wordsworth. What is then to be inferred ? O many things. It proves there is really a grand march of intellect, it proves that a mighty Providence subdues the mightiest minds to the service of the time being, whether it be in human Knowledge or Religion. I have often pitied a tutor who has to hear “*Nom. Musa*” so often dinn’d into his ears—I hope you may not have the same pain in this scribbling—I may have read these things before, but I never had even a thus dim perception of them ; and moreover I like to say my lesson to one who will endure my tediousness, for my own sake. After all there is certainly something real in the world—Moore’s present to Hazlitt is real—I like that Moore, and am glad I saw him at the Theatre just before I left town. Tom has spit a *leetle* blood this afternoon, and that is rather a damper—but I know—the truth is, there is something real in the World. Your third Chamber of Life shall be a lucky and a gentle one—stored with the wine of Love—and the bread of Friendship. When you see George, if he should not have received a letter from me tell him he will find one at home most likely—tell Bailey I hope soon to see him. Remember me to all. The leaves have been out here for many a day. I have written

to George for the first stanzas of my "Isabel,"—I shall have them soon, and will copy the whole out for you.

Your affectionate friend

JOHN KEATS.

### A VERDICT UPON THE LITERATURE OF HIS OWN AGE

*Thomas De Quincey to a Young Man Who Had Consulted Him Upon the Advisability of Adopting Literature as a Career*

Want of experience, therefore, or insufficient experience, may render my judgment in such a case partially wrong. But at least I can promise you an honest judgment; and next week, when I shall be less oppressed by calls upon my time, this shall be at your service. By an honest judgment I do not mean to insinuate that authors in general are capable of feeling any bias from jealousy lest they should be the means of introducing a fresh competitor into the paths of literature. Far from it. The literary body, as a whole, is honourable, and generous. And very few, indeed, I am sure, would give a false report under *this* bias. But most men addict themselves to speaking cynically of contemporary literature, as every age and generation in succession speaks cynically of itself. They persuade themselves that all things are amiss; that the spirit of originality is extinct; and, as every age in turn sees most of the imitative spirit which gathers round the heel of power, these men fancy *that* peculiar to their own times which has merely been brushed away from the face of past times by its own intrinsic perishableness. Now, at least I can hold myself to be free from these too common prepossessions. I see more to admire, more power and vital force of every

kind, in my own generation than in any other. And I refuse to be duped by the scenical effects of distance or abstraction. It does not follow that our literature is in a good state. I think it far otherwise ; but its faults are not from want of power.

With respect to the other question, not only is it much more difficult because a *personal* question, allowing for the utmost candour in both parties to such an inquiry, but it is really a dangerous one for any peremptory judgment, and for a reason which, perhaps, you will stare at. The notion is universal that talent, *a fortiori* genius, never grows. All which a man has he had from the beginning. Growth takes place in knowledge, in skill, in address, and many artificial qualities ; but not, it is supposed, in downright power. Now, I beg you to suppose that it is no love of paradox which forces me into any opposite opinion. I will not contend as to the absolute metaphysical realities of the case. Whether genius, like coal and diamonds in some theories, is always in a secret state of growth, or whether it is only that a veil clears away from the mind, leaving what was always there more conspicuously visible, either way the result is the same ; experience of life, larger comprehension of truth, above all, solitude, grief, meditation, *do* effectually bring out powers in the adult not conjecturally visible in the boy or very young man.

#### CONGRATULATING DICKENS ON "THE CHRISTMAS CAROL"

*Francis Jeffrey to Charles Dickens*

Edinburgh, December 26, 1843.

Blessings on your kind heart, my dear Dickens ! and may it always be as light and full as it is kind, and

a fountain of kindness to all within reach of its beatings ! We are all charmed with your Carol, chiefly, I think, for the genuine goodness which breathes all through it, and in the true inspiring angel by which its genius has been awakened. The whole scene of the Cratchetts is like the dream of a beneficent angel in spite of its broad reality, and little tiny Tim, in life and death almost as sweet and as touching as Nelly. And then the school-day scene, with that large-hearted delicate sister, and her true inheritor, with his gall-lacking liver, and milk of human kindness for blood, and yet all so natural, and so humbly and serenely happy ! Well, you should be happy yourself, for you may be sure you have done more good, and not only fastened more kindly feelings, but prompted more positive acts of beneficence, by this little publication, than can be traced to all the pulpits and confessionals in Christendom since Christmas, 1842.

And is not this better than caricaturing American knaveries, or lavishing your great gifts of fancy and observation on Pecksniffs, Dodgers, Bailleys, and Moulds. Nor is this a mere crotchet of mine, for nine-tenths of your readers, I am convinced, are of the same opinion ; and accordingly, I prophesy that you will sell three times as many of this moral and pathetic Carol as of your grotesque and fantastical Chuzzlewits.

I hope you have not fancied that I think less frequently of you, or love you less, because I have not lately written to you. Indeed it is not so ; but I have been poorly in health for the last five months, and advancing age makes me lazy and perhaps forgetful. But I do not forget my benefactors, and I owe too much to you not to have you constantly in my thoughts. I scarcely know a single individual to

whom I am indebted for so much pleasure, and the means at least of being made better. I wish you had not made such an onslaught on the Americans. Even if it were all merited, it does mischief, and no good. Besides, you know that there are many exceptions ; and if ten righteous might have saved a city once, there are surely innocent and amiable men and women, and besides, boys and girls enough, in that vast region, to arrest the proscription of a nation. I cannot but hope, therefore, that you will relent before you have done with them, and contrast your deep shadings with some redeeming touches. God bless you. I must not say more to-day. With most kind love to Mrs. Dickens, always very affectionately, etc.

Since writing this in the morning, and just as I was going to seal it, in comes another copy of the Carol, with a flattering autograph on the blank page, and an address in your own " fine Roman hand." I thank you with all my heart, for this proof of your remembrance, and am pleased to think, that while I was so occupied about you, you had not been forgetful of me. Heaven bless you and all that are dear to you. Ever yours, etc.

#### A LADY'S OPINION OF LORD BYRON

*Miss Mitford to Benjamin Robert Haydon*

*2nd November, 1824.*

I have just finished Lord Byron's " Conversations " (you are going to be very angry now), and I find my words of enthusiasm for the noble poet very fully justified and borne out. To say nothing of the open and avowed profligacy abroad and at home, only think of the taste which the book shows—the crying

down Keats, Milton, Shakespeare, Wordsworth—the crying up Moore's frippery songs, Dr. Johnson's heavy criticisms, and his own dull plays. What he says of Shakespeare, and of Wordsworth in particular, is disgusting. To fasten on the few and rare grossnesses of Shakespeare, which pure-minded readers pass over almost without consciousness, and forget all that there is of divine in the poet of the world; and to pitch on a few faults of system in Wordsworth, and to speak of him as if he was no poet at all. Fifty years hence our descendants will see which is remembered best, the author of the "Excursion," or of "Childe Harold." But he seems to me to have wanted the power of admiration, the organ of veneration; to have been a cold, sneering, vain, Voltairish person, charitable as far as money went, and liberal as far as it did not interfere with his aristocratic notions; but very derisive, very un-English, very scornful. Captain Medwyn speaks of his suppressed laugh. How unpleasant an idea that gives! The only thing that does him much credit in the whole book is his hearty admiration of Scott. But Scott did not interfere with him. If Sir Walter had been a poet as Wordsworth, we should have seen.

#### BYRON BEYOND WORDSWORTH AND KEATS BEYOND THEM ALL

*Benjamin Robert Haydon to Miss Mitford*

1824.

You are unjust, depend upon it, in your estimate of Byron's poetry, and wrong in your ranking Wordsworth beyond him. There are things in Byron's poetry so exquisite, that, fifty or five hundred years hence, they will be read, felt, and adored throughout

the world. I grant that Wordsworth is very pure and very holy, and very orthodox, and occasionally very elevated, highly poetical, and often insufferably obscure, starched, dowdy, anti-human and anti-sympathetic, but he never will be ranked above Byron nor classed with Milton ; he will not, indeed. He wants the constructive power, the *lucidus ordo* of the greatest minds, which is as much a proof of the highest order as any other quality. I dislike his selfish Quakerism ; his affectation of superior virtue ; his utter insensibility to the frailties—the beautiful frailties of passion. I was once walking with him on Pall Mall ; we darted into Christie's. A copy of the "Transfiguration" was at the head of the room, and in the corner a beautiful copy of the "Cupid and Psyche" (statues) kissing. Cupid is taking her lovely chin, and turning her pouting mouth to meet his, while he archly bends his own down, as if saying, "Pretty dear ! " You remember this exquisite group ? . . . Catching sight of the Cupid, as he and I were coming out, Wordsworth's face reddened, he showed his teeth, and then said in a loud voice, "THE DEV-V-V-VILS ! " There's a mind ! Ought not this exquisite group to have roused his "Shapes of Beauty," and have softened his heart as much as his old gray-mossed rocks, his withered thorn, and his dribbling mountain streams ? I am altered about Wordsworth, very much, from finding him a bard too elevated to attend to the music of humanity. No, no ! give me Byron, with all his spite, hatred, depravity, dandyism, vanity, frankness, passion, and idleness, to Wordsworth, with all his heartless communion with woods and grass.

When he came back from his tour, I breakfasted with him in Oxford street. He read "Laodamia"

to me, and very finely. He had altered, at the suggestion of his wife, Laodamia's fate (but I cannot refer to it at this moment), because she had shown such weakness as to wish her husband's stay. Mrs. Wordsworth held that Laodamia ought to be punished, and punished she was. I will refer to it. Here it is—

“She, whom a trance of passion thus removed  
As she departed, not without the crime  
Of lovers, who, in reason's spite have loved,  
Was doomed to wander in a joyless clime,  
Apart from happy ghosts, that gather flowers  
Of blissful quiet in Elysian bowers.”

I have it in his own hand. This is different from the first edition. And as he repeated it with self-approbation of his own heroic feelings for punishing a wife because she felt a pang at her husband going to hell again, his own wife sat crouched by the fireplace, and chanted every line to the echo, apparently congratulating herself at being above the mortal frailty of loving her William.

You should make allowance for Byron's not liking Keats. He could not. Keats' poetry was an immortal stretch beyond the mortal intensity of his own. An intense egotism, as it were, was the leading exciter of Byron's genius. He could feel nothing for fauns, or satyrs, or gods, or characters past, unless the associations of them were excited by some positive natural scene where they had actually died, written or fought. All his poetry was the result of a deep feeling roused by what passed before his eyes. Keats was a stretch beyond this.

HE RETURNS TO HIS CLASSICS AND FINDS IN THEM  
SOLACE FOR GRIEF

*Lord Macaulay to Thomas Flower Ellis*

Calcutta, February 8, 1835.

DEAR ELLIS,—The last month has been the most painful that I ever went through. Indeed, I never knew before what it was to be miserable. Early in January, letters from England brought me news of the death of my youngest sister. What she was to me no words can express. I will not say that she was dearer to me than anything in the world ; for my sister who was with me was equally dear ; but she was as dear to me as one human being can be to another. Even now, when Time has begun to do its healing office, I cannot write about her without being altogether unmanned. That I have not utterly sunk under this blow I owe chiefly to literature. What a blessing it is to love books as I love them ; and to be able to converse with the dead—to live amidst the unreal ! Many times during the last few weeks I have repeated to myself those fine lines of old Hesiod :

εἰ γάρ τις καὶ πένθος ἔχων νεοκηδέῃ θυμῷ  
δῖστηται κραδίην ἀκαχήμενος, οὐτάρ δοιδός  
μουσάων θεράπων κλεία προτέρων ἀνθρώπων  
ύμνηση, μάκαράς τε θεούς οἱ Ὄλυμπον ἔχουσι,  
αλψί δγε δυσφρονέων ἐπιλήθεται, οὐδέ τι κηδέων  
μέμνηται· ταχέως δὲ παρέτραπε δῶρα θεῶν.<sup>1</sup>

I have gone back to Greek literature with a passion

<sup>1</sup> “ For if to one whose grief is fresh, as he sits silent with sorrow-stricken heart, a minstrel, the henchman of the Muses, celebrates the men of old and the gods who possess Olympus ; straightway he forgets his melancholy, and remembers not at all his grief, beguiled by the blessed gift of the goddesses of song.” In Macaulay’s *Hesiod* this passage is scored with three lines in pencil.

quite astonishing to myself.<sup>1</sup> I have never felt anything like it. I was enraptured with Italian during the six months which I gave up to it ; and I was little less pleased with Spanish. But, when I went back to the Greek, I felt as if I had never known before what intellectual enjoyment was. Oh that wonderful people ! There is not one art, nor one science, about which we may not use the same expression which Lucretius has employed about the victory over superstition, “ *Primum Graius homo—*.”

I think myself very fortunate in having been able to return to these great masters while still in the full vigor of life, and when my taste and judgment are mature. Most people read all the Greek that they ever read before they are five and twenty. They never find time for such studies afterwards till they are in the decline of life ; and then their knowledge of the language is in a great measure lost, and cannot easily be recovered. Accordingly, almost all the ideas that people have of Greek literature, are ideas formed while they were still very young. A young

<sup>1</sup> In a previous letter, dated December 15, 1834, directed from Calcutta to the same correspondent he had said : “ I read much, and particularly Greek ; and I find that I am, in all essentials, still not a bad scholar. I could, I think, with a year’s hard study, qualify myself to fight a good battle for a Craven’s scholarship. I read, however, not as I read at College, but like a man of the world. If I do not know a word, I pass it by, unless it is important to the sense. If I find, as I have of late often found, a passage which refuses to give up its meaning at the second reading, I let it alone. I have read during the past fortnight, before breakfast, three books of Herodotus, and four plays of Æschylus. My admiration of Æschylus has been prodigiously increased by this re-perusal. I cannot conceive how any person of the smallest pretension to taste should doubt about his immeasurable superiority to every poet of antiquity, Homer only excepted. Even Milton, I think, must yield to him.”

man, whatever his genius may be, is no judge of such a writer as Thucydides. I had no high opinion of him ten years ago. I have now been reading him with a mind accustomed to historical researches, and to political affairs ; and I am astonished at my own former blindness, and at his greatness. I could not bear Euripides at college. I now read my recantation. He has faults undoubtedly. But what a poet ! The Medea, the Alcestis, the Troades, the Bacchæ, are alone sufficient to place him in the very first rank. Instead of depreciating him, as I have done, I may, for aught I know, end by editing him.

I have read Pindar—with less pleasure than I feel in reading the great Attic poets, but still with admiration. An idea occurred to me which may very likely have been noticed by a hundred people before. I was always puzzled to understand the reason for the extremely abrupt transitions in those Odes of Horace which are meant to be particularly fine. The “*justum et tenacem*” is an instance. All at once you find yourself in heaven, Heaven knows how. What the firmness of just men in times of tyranny, or of tumult, has to do with Juno’s oration about Troy it is hardly possible to conceive. Then, again, how strangely the fight between the Gods and the Giants is tacked on to the fine hymn to the Muses in that noble ode, “*Descende cœlo et dic age tibiâ*” ! This always struck me as a great fault, and an inexplicable one ; for it is peculiarly alien from the calm good sense, and good taste, which distinguish Horace.

My explanation of it is this. The Odes of Pindar were the acknowledged models of lyric poetry. Lyric poets imitated his manner as closely as they could ; and nothing was more remarkable in his compositions than the extreme violence and abruptness of the

transitions. This in Pindar was quite natural and defensible. He had to write an immense number of poems on subjects extremely barren, and extremely monotonous. There could be little difference between one boxing-match and another. Accordingly, he made all possible haste to escape from the immediate subject, and to bring in, by hook or by crook, some local description ; some old legend ; something or other, in short, which might be more susceptible of poetical embellishment, and less utterly threadbare, than the circumstances of a race or a wrestling-match. This was not the practice of Pindar alone. There is an old story which proves that Simonides did the same, and that sometimes the hero of the day was nettled at finding how little was said about him in the Ode for which he was to pay. This abruptness of transition was, therefore, in the Greek lyric poets, a fault rendered inevitable by the peculiarly barren and uniform nature of the subjects which they had to treat. But, like many other faults of great masters, it appeared to their imitators a beauty ; and a beauty almost essential to the grander Ode. Horace was perfectly at liberty to choose his own subjects, and to treat them after his own fashion. But he confounded what was merely accidental in Pindar's manner with what was essential ; and because Pindar, when he had to celebrate a foolish lad from Ægina who had tripped up another's heels at the Isthmus, made all possible haste to get away from so paltry a topic to the ancient heroes of the race of Æacus, Horace took it into his head that he ought always to begin as far from the subject as possible, and then arrive at it by some strange and sudden bound. This is my solution. At least I can find no better. The most obscure passage,—at least the strangest passage,

—in all Horace may be explained by supposing that he was misled by Pindar's example: I mean that odd parenthesis in the “Qualem Ministrum”:

quibus  
Mos unde deductus per omne—.

This passage, taken by itself, always struck me as the harshest, queerest, and most preposterous digression in the world. But there are several things in Pindar very like it.

You must excuse all this, for I labour at present under a suppression of Greek, and am likely to do so for at least three years to come. Malkin may be some relief; but I am quite unable to guess whether he means to come to Calcutta. I am in excellent bodily health, and I am recovering my mental health; but I have been sorely tried. Money matters look well. My new brother-in-law and I are brothers in more than law. I am more comfortable than I expected to be in this country; and, as to the climate, I think it, beyond all comparison, better than that of the House of Commons.

Yours affectionately  
T. B. MACAULAY.

#### WHEREIN PLATO IS RE-DISCOVERED AND A GERMAN PROFESSOR CONDEMNED

*Lord Macaulay to Thomas Flower Ellis*

Calcutta, May 29, 1835.

My time is divided between public business and books. I mix with society as little as I can. My spirits have not yet recovered—I sometimes think that they will never wholly recover,—the shock which they received five months ago. I find that nothing

soothes them so much as the contemplation of those miracles of Art which Athens has bequeathed to us. I am really becoming, I hope not a pedant, but certainly an enthusiast about classical literature. I have just finished a second reading of Sophocles. I am now deep in Plato, and intend to go right through all his works. His genius is above praise. Even where he is most absurd,—as, for example, in the Cratylus,—he shows an acuteness, and an expanse of intellect, which is quite a phenomenon by itself. The character of Socrates does not rise upon me. The more I read about him, the less I wonder that they poisoned him. If he had treated me as he is said to have treated Protagoras, Hippias, and Gorgias, I could never have forgiven him.

Nothing has struck me so much in Plato's dialogues as the raillery. At college, somehow or other, I did not understand or appreciate it. I cannot describe to you the way in which it now tickles me. I often sink forward on my huge old Marsilius Ficinus in a fit of laughter. I should say that there never was a vein of ridicule so rich, at the same time so delicate. It is superior to Voltaire's; nay, to Pascal's. Perhaps there are one or two passages in Cervantes, and one or two in Fielding, that might give a modern reader a notion of it.

I have very nearly finished Livy. I never read him through before. I admire him greatly, and would give a quarter's salary to recover the lost Decades. While I was reading the earlier books I went again through Niebuhr. And I am sorry to say that, having always been a little sceptical about his merits, I am now a confirmed unbeliever. I do not of course mean that he has no merit. He was a man of immense learning, and of great ingenuity. But his

mind was utterly wanting in the faculty by which a demonstrated truth is distinguished from a plausible supposition. He is not content with suggesting that an event may have happened. He is certain that it happened, and calls on the reader to be certain too (though not a trace of it exists in any record whatever), because it would solve the phenomena so neatly. Just read over again, if you have forgotten it, the conjectural restoration of the Inscription in page 126 of the second volume ; and then, on your honour as a scholar and a man of sense, tell me whether in Bentley's edition of Milton there is anything which approaches to the audacity of the emendation. Niebuhr requires you to believe that some of the greatest men in Rome were burned alive in the Circus ; that this event was commemorated by an inscription on a monument, one-half of which is still in existence ; but that no Roman historian knew anything about it ; and that all tradition of the event was lost, though the memory of anterior events much less important has reached our time. When you ask for a reason, he tells you plainly that such a thing cannot be established by reason ; that he is sure of it ; and that you must take his word. This sort of intellectual despotism always moves me to mutiny, and generates a disposition to pull down the reputation of the dogmatist. Niebuhr's learning was immeasurably superior to mine ; but I think myself quite as good a judge of evidence as he was. I might easily believe him if he told me that there were proofs which I had never seen ; but, when he produces all his proofs, I conceive that I am perfectly competent to pronounce on their value.

I turned over his leaves just now, I lighted on another instance of what I cannot but call ridiculous

presumption. He says that Martial committed a blunder in making the penultimate of Porsena short. Strange that so great a scholar should not know that Horace had done so too !

Minacis aut Etrusca Porsenæ manus.

There is something extremely nauseous to me in a German Professor telling the world, on his own authority, and without giving the smallest reason, that two of the best Latin poets were ignorant of the quantity of a word which they must have used in their exercises at school a hundred times.

As to the general capacity of Niebuhr for political speculations, let him be judged by the Preface to the Second Volume. He there says, referring to the French Revolution of July 1830, that "unless God send us some miraculous help, we have to look forward to a period of destruction similar to that which the Roman world experienced about the middle of the third century." Now, when I see a man scribble such abject nonsense about events which are passing under our eyes, what confidence can I put in his judgment as to the connection of causes and effects in times very imperfectly known to us ?

But I must bring my letter, or review, to a close. Remember me most kindly to your wife. Tell Frank that I mean to be a better scholar than he when I come back, and that he must work hard if he means to overtake me.

Ever, dear Ellis,

Your affectionate friend

T. B. MACAULAY.

“THE GRAND HEROIC SPIRIT—THAT TRUMPET-STOP  
ON HIS ORGAN”

*Charles Lever to John Blackwood*

Trieste, August 17, 1871.

The fine part of Scott's nature to my thinking was the grand heroic spirit—that trumpet-stop on his organ—which elevated our commonplace people and stirred the heart of all that was high-spirited and generous amongst us. It was the anti-climax to our realism and sensationalism—detective Police Literature or Watch-house Romance. . . The very influence that a gentleman exerts in society on a knot of inferiors was the sort of influence Scott brought to bear upon the whole nation. All felt that there was at least one there before whom nothing mean or low or shabby should be exhibited.

THOSE INIMITABLE DICKENS TOUCHES

*William Makepeace Thackeray to Mrs. Brookfield*

1849.

Have you read Dickens? O! it is charming! brave Dickens! It has some of his very prettiest touches—those inimitable Dickens touches which make such a great man of him; and the reading of the book has done another author a great deal of good. In the first place it pleases the other author to see that Dickens, who has long left off alluding to the A's works, has been copying the O. A. and greatly simplifying his style, and overcoming the use of fine words. By this the public will be the gainer and *David Copperfield* will be improved by taking a lesson from *Vanity Fair*. Secondly it has put me upon my metal; for ah! Madame, all the

metal was out of me and I have been dreadfully and curiously cast down this month past. I say, secondly it has put me on my metal and made me feel I must do something ; that I have fame and name and family to support. . . .

## HE REVOLTS AGAINST ASCETICISM

*William Makepeace Thackeray to Mr. and Mrs. Brookfield*

Christmas, 1849.

I stop in the middle of Costigan with a remark applied to readers of Thomas à Kempis and others, which is, I think, that cushion-thumpers and High and Low Church extatics, have often carried what they call their love for  $\Delta$  to what seems impertinence to me. How good my —— has been to me in sending me a backache,—how good in taking it away, how blessed the spiritual gift which enabled me to receive the sermon this morning,—how trying my dryness at this afternoon's discourse, etc. I say it is awful and blasphemous to be calling upon Heaven to interfere about the thousand trivialities of a man's life, that — has ordered me something indigestible for dinner (which may account for my dryness in the afternoon's discourse) ; to say that it is Providence that sends a draught of air upon me which gives me a cold in the head, or superintends personally the action of the James' powder that makes me well. Bow down, confess, Adore, Admire, and Reverence infinitely. Make your act of faith and trust. Acknowledge with constant awe the idea of the infinite Presence over all.—But what impudence it is in us, to talk about loving God enough, if I may so speak. Wretched

little blindlings, what do we know about Him ? Who says that we are to sacrifice the human affections as disrespectful to God ? The liars, the wretched canting fakirs of Christianity, the convent and conventicle dervishes,—they are only less unreasonable now than the Eremites and holy women who whipped and starved themselves, never washed, and encouraged vermin for the glory of God. Washing is allowed now, and bodily filth and pain not always enjoined ; but still they say, shut your ears and don't hear music, close your eyes and don't see nature and beauty, steel your hearts and be ashamed of your love for your neighbour ; and timid fond souls scared by their curses, and bending before their unending arrogance and dulness, consent to be miserable, and bare their soft shoulders for the brutes' stripes, according to the nature of women. You dear Suttees, you get ready and glorify in being martyred. Nature, truth, love, protest day after day in your tender hearts against the stupid remorseless tyranny which bullies you. Why you dear creature, what a history that is in the Thomas à Kempis book ! The scheme of that book carried out would make the world the most wretched, useless, dreary, doting place of sojourn —there would be no manhood, no love, no tender ties of mother and child, no use of intellect, no trade or science, a set of selfish beings crawling about avoiding one another and howling a perpetual *miserere*. We know that deductions like this have been drawn from the teaching of J. C., but please God the world is preparing to throw them over, and I won't believe them though they are written in ever so many books, any more than that the sky is green or the grass red. Those brutes made the grass red many a time, fancying they were acting rightly, amongst others with the

blood of the person who was born to-day. Goodbye my dear lady and my dear old William.

A WOMAN AND HER HERO <sup>1</sup>

*Charlotte Brontë to W. S. Williams* <sup>2</sup>

I

*Dec. 11th, 1847.*

I was glad and proud to get the bank bill Mr. Smith sent me yesterday, but I hardly ever felt delight equal to that which cheered me when I received your letter containing an extract from a note by Mr. Thackeray, in which he expressed himself gratified with the perusal of *Jane Eyre*. Mr. Thackeray is a

<sup>1</sup> Thackeray (1811-1863) in 1848 sent Miss Brontë a copy of *Vanity Fair*. In 1852 he sent her a copy of *Esmond*, together with his grateful regards. The second edition of *Jane Eyre* was dedicated by Charlotte Brontë to him as to "an intellect profounder and more unique than his contemporaries have yet recognised." When his portrait was presented to her by Mr. George Smith, she stood before it, shaking her fist at it half-playfully, and saying, "Thou Titan!" After her death Thackeray recorded the impression wrought upon him by his first meeting with her in these words: "I fancied an austere little Joan of Arc marching in upon us and rebuking our easy lives, our easy morals." Again he says: "She gave me the impression of being a very pure, and lofty, and high-minded person. A great and holy reverence of right and truth seemed to be with her always."

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Williams (1800-1875) was the recipient of far and away the best letters that Charlotte Brontë ever wrote. He was "reader" to the publishing house of Smith & Elder; a post which has since been held by George Meredith, John Morley, and James Payn. It will be remembered that this was the firm which published the Brontë novels. He was a man of distinguished friendships. He had met with Coleridge. When Keats left England for Italy, it was Williams who saw him off. He associated with Hazlitt, Leigh Hunt, Thackeray, Mrs. Gaskell, Ruskin, and many other well-known writers.

keen ruthless satirist. I had never perused his writings but with blended feelings of admiration and indignation. Critics, it appears to me, do not know what an intellectual boa-constrictor he is. They call him "humorous," "brilliant"—his is a most scalping humour, a most deadly brilliancy: he does not play with his prey, he coils round it and crushes it in his rings. He seems terribly in earnest in his war against the falsehood and follies of "the world." I often wonder what that "world" thinks of him. I should think the faults of such a man would be distrust of anything good in human nature—galling suspicion of bad motives lurking behind good actions. Are these his failings?

They are, at any rate, the failings of his written sentiments, for he cannot find in his heart to represent either man or woman as at once good and wise. Does he not too much confound benevolence with weakness and wisdom with mere craft?

## II

*March 29th, 1848.*

You mention Thackeray and the last number of *Vanity Fair*. The more I read Thackeray's works the more certain I am that he stands alone—alone in his sagacity, alone in his truth, alone in his feeling (his feeling, though he makes no noise about it, is about the most genuine that ever lived on a printed page), alone in his power, alone in his simplicity, alone in his self-control. Thackeray is a Titan, so strong that he can afford to perform with calm the most herculean feats; there is the charm and majesty of repose in his greatest efforts; *he* borrows nothing from fever, his is never the energy of delirium—his

energy is sane energy, deliberate energy, thoughtful energy. The last number of *Vanity Fair* proves this peculiarly. Forceful, exciting in its force, still more impressive than exciting, carrying on the interest of the narrative in a flow, deep, full, resistless, it is still quiet—as quiet as reflection, as quiet as memory ; and to me there are parts of it that sound as solemn as an oracle. Thackeray is never borne away by his own ardour—he has it under control. His genius obeys him—it is his servant, it works no fantastic changes at its own wild will, it must still achieve the task which reason and sense assign it, and none other. Thackeray is unique. I *can* say no more, I *will* say no less.

## III

*Aug. 14th, 1848.*

I have already told you, I believe, that I regard Mr. Thackeray as the first of modern masters, and as the legitimate high priest of truth ; I study him accordingly with reverence. He, I see, keeps the mermaid's tail below water, and only hints at the dead men's bones and noxious slime amidst which it wriggles ; *but*, his hint is more vivid than other men's elaborate explanations, and never is his satire whetted to so keen an edge as when with quiet mocking irony he modestly recommends to the approbation of the public his own exemplary discretion and forbearance. The world begins to know Thackeray rather better than it did two years or even a year ago, but as yet it only half knows him. His mind seems to me a fabric as simple and unpretending as it is deep-founded and enduring —there is no meretricious ornament to attract or fix a superficial glance ; his great distinction of the

genuine is one that can only be fully appreciated with time. There is something, a sort of "still profound," revealed in the concluding part of *Vanity Fair* which the discernment of one generation will not suffice to fathom. A hundred years hence, if he only lives to do justice to himself, he will be better known than he is now. A hundred years hence, some thoughtful critic, standing and looking down on the deep waters, will see shining through them the pearl without price of a purely original mind—such a mind as the Bulwers, etc., his contemporaries have *not*,—not acquirements gained from study, but the thing that came into the world with him—his inherent genius: the thing that made him, I doubt not, different as a child from other children, that caused him, perhaps, peculiar griefs and struggles in life, and that now makes him as a writer unlike other writers. Excuse me for recurring to this theme, I do not wish to bore you.

## IV

*January 10th, 1850.*

Thackeray's Christmas Book at once grieved and pleased me, as most of his writings do. I have come to the conclusion that whenever he writes, Mephistopheles stands on his right hand and Raphael on his left; the great doubter and sneerer usually guides the pen, the Angel, noble and gentle, interlines letters of light here and there. Alas! Thackeray, I wish your strong wings would lift you oftener above the smoke of cities into the pure region nearer heaven!

THE CHINESE FIDELITY AND MINIATURE DELICACY  
OF JANE AUSTEN*Charlotte Brontë to W. S. Williams**April 12th, 1850.*

I have likewise read one of Miss Austen's works—*Emma*—read it with interest and with the degree of admiration which Miss Austen herself would have thought sensible and suitable. Anything like warmth or enthusiasm—anything energetic, poignant, heartfelt is utterly out of place in commending these works: all such demonstration the authoress would have met with a well-bred sneer, would have calmly scorned as *outré* and extravagant. She does her business of delineating the surface of the lives of genteel English people curiously well. There is a Chinese fidelity, a miniature delicacy in the painting. She ruffles her reader by nothing vehement, disturbs him by nothing profound. The passions are perfectly unknown to her; she rejects even a speaking acquaintance with that stormy sisterhood. Even to the feelings she vouchsafes no more than an occasional graceful but distant recognition—too frequent converse with them would ruffle the smooth elegance of her progress. Her business is not half so much with human heart as with the human eyes, mouth, hands, and feet. What sees keenly, speaks aptly, moves flexibly, it suits her to study; but what throbs fast and full, though hidden, what the blood rushes through, what is the unseen seat of life and the sentient target of death—this Miss Austen ignores. She no more, with her mind's eye, beholds the heart of her race than each man, with bodily vision, sees the heart in his heaving breast. Jane Austen was a complete and most sensible lady, but a

very incomplete and rather insensible (*not senseless*) woman. If this is heresy, I cannot help it. If I said it to some people (Lewes for instance) they would directly accuse me of advocating exaggerated heroics, but I am not afraid of your falling into any such vulgar error.—Believe me, yours sincerely.

C. BRONTË.

### MEASURING CHARACTER BY A MAN'S FAVOURITE POET

*Frederick W. Robertson to ——*

*February 22, 1849.*

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I send you the volume of Wordsworth, which you forgot last night. One must not be too young, either in heart of years, to lie entirely open to his influence.

I fancy character may be measured, both in depth and quality, by the poet who is the chosen favourite. He is a kind of Nilometer to mark the depth of different distances on the river. A man's Nilometer, in the higher regions, may be Shelley. The wild and marvellous stream is then still in the air region, finding a home among clouds, cutting a narrow way through clefts of rock, flowing for many hundred yards together under frozen patches of snow—a strange and beautiful life in the waste of the eternal silence, issuing out clear and pure and cold a little higher up, from the delicately blue cavern of the glacier. Even in its lower and earthly flow, the Stream will appear to hold mysterious connection, as if by invisible sympathy, with its source, and even the inarticulate murmurs of its daily ripples will seem but the cadences which ought to be heard only in those still and solemn realms.

Down in the plains, in the less unearthly part of

its course, the water-mark of such a man will stand at Burns. A strong, swift flow, so deep as to scarcely seem to move on the surface; somewhat turbid, but the very earth which discolours it will often be purer than the snow which falls into other rivers direct from the cloud of Heaven.

Between these two regions of such a man's life, Wordsworth will mark the height and temperature of the stream in a part of its course which will be at present invisible—being lost, as is the case with some rivers, for many miles underground. But when this lost power of life shall reappear, Wordsworth will only mark the depth and temperature near the banks. The central depths he will not be able to sound.

“WHAT I ADMIRE IN SHAKSPEARE IS THAT HIS LOVES  
ARE ALL HUMAN”

*Frederick W. Robertson to ——*

1849.

Much of the beauty that is laid to Shakspeare's charge is too far-fetched to have been intended by him. Mrs. Jameson errs in this respect, and so do the Germans. In an article in *Blackwood*, years ago, replete with humour, I recollect these words, “And she,” as the poet pathetically expresses it, “did so.” Such critics do with Shakspeare just as Swedenborg with the Bible—inform it with themselves and their own sentiments and philosophy, or, as the wolf did with Baron Munchausen's horse, began at his tail and ate into him until the baron drove the wolf home, harnessed in the skin of the horse. Certainly Shakspeare was a “million-minded man,” if he was conscious of the innumerable philosophies and psycholo-

gical truths which his million critics have found in every trifling word and sentence. I am heretic enough to think that Shakspeare was mind and dust, and that he can be very low and gross. Horace ventured to opine that now and then Homer nodded a little; he said it in a very gentlemanly way—for the friend of Mæcenas was a perfect gentleman—but I had no doubt he was reckoned a heretic for saying it. What I admire in Shakspeare, however, is that his loves are all human—no earthliness hiding itself from itself in sentimental transcendentalism—no loves of the angels, which are the least angelic things, I believe, that float in the clouds, though they do look down upon mortal feelings with contempt, just as the dark volumes of smoke which issue from the long chimney of a manufactory might brood very sublimely over the town which they blacken, and fancy themselves far more ethereal than those vapours which steam up from the earth by day and night. Yet these are pure water, and those are destined to condense in black soot. So are the transcendentalisms of affection. Shakspeare is healthy, true to Humanity in this: and for that reason I pardon him even his earthly coarseness. You always know that you are on an earth which has to be refined, instead of floating in the empyrean with wings of wax. Therein he is immeasurably greater than Shelley. Shelleyism is sublime, sublimer a good deal than God, for God's world is all wrong, and Shelley is all right—much purer than Christ, for Shelley can criticise Christ's heart and life—nevertheless, Shelleyism is only atmospheric profligacy, to coin a Montgomeryism. I believe this to be one of Shakspeare's most wondrous qualities—the humanity of his nature and heart.

There is a spirit of sunny endeavour about him, and an acquiescence in things as they are—not incompatible with a cheerful resolve to make them better, which I trust will be good for your mind. Mine wants it much. I speak bitterly of transcendentalism, for it is the rock on which I split; and I do not believe either in its usefulness or its heavenliness.

For man is not as God,  
But then most God-like, being most a man.

A sunny, cheerful view of life—resting on truth and fact, coexisting with practical aspiration ever to make things, men, and self, better than they are—that, I believe, is the true healthful poetry of existence. All other poetry of feeling, however delicate and beautiful, is only sickly; the mawkish feeling, which sees more beauty in unnatural Consumption than in the ruddy glow of exercise.

“ SHAKSPEARE PAINTS MAN INSTEAD OF WRITING MORAL TALES ”

*Frederick W. Robertson to —*

1849.

I have got Schlegel, and mean to master all that he has said of Shakespeare. Spare moments of time I occupy in studying “Romeo and Juliet.” Certainly it is the most exquisite embodiment of the master feeling that was ever made. I shall have much to say about it soon. But one thing strikes me in a view of the whole—how very masterly the representation is of the unrelenting way in which consequences follow acts in this world. A clandestine marriage and a revengeful duel—the results are a double death. And this is not all. Circumstances

mix with all human acts ; they are partly, as it would seem, necessitated, or, at least, excused by peculiarity of position. There is no act which has not its excuse and its apparent inevitableness. Ordinary writers tag a moral to their tale ; as Miss Edgeworth does,—which peeps out on every page : “ If he had acted so, then,” etc., but the moral of life is not forced upon you in this way ; it is complicated, perplexing, and requires study to find out. Nay, you may find fifty morals instead of the moral of life’s tragedy ; and in this way Shakspeare paints. Partly circumstance, partly fault, partly what in itself is beautiful, lead to the catastrophe. Not one simple cause, but many causes, intertwined, made up the shot web of his tragedy, as of life. And yet as unrelentingly as in life, the sorrow comes to blight it all. Situated as they were, a Montague and a Capulet, could they be severely blamed for marrying ? Situated as Romeo was, his friend killed for him, could he refuse Tybalt’s challenge ? And yet these double errors, the results themselves of the faults of others, not wholly blameless, yet not unmixedly culpable, slowly and surely bring on the end.

There are three great principles in life which weave its  *warp* and *woof*, apparently incompatible with each other, yet they harmonise, and, in their blending, create this strange life of ours. The first is, our fate is in our own hands, and our blessedness and misery is the exact result of our own acts. The second is, “ There is a divinity that shapes our ends, rough-hew them as we will.” The third is, “ The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong ; ” but time and chance happen(eth) to them all. Accident, human will, the shaping will of Deity : these things make up life. Or rather, perhaps, we see a

threefold causality from some defect in our spiritual eyesight. Could we see as He sees, all would be referable to one principle which would contain them all ; as the simple, single law of gravitation embraces the complex phenomena of the universe ; and as, on the other hand, by pressing the eyeballs so as to destroy their united impression, you may see all things double. Shakspeare paints man instead of writing moral tales. Of course, there is a moral in what he writes, as there must be in all that is true ; but it is absurd to ask what was the lesson he meant to inculcate. He meant none, I fancy. He meant to say, "*There*, there are men and women. Under such circumstances, such beings would act so, and such would be the consequences." How much more instructive than history, which is merely, except in mere annals, events grouped in the connection in which the historian sees them, not in which they occurred, unless he be a man as gifted as Shakspeare. Hence history is merely in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, Mr. Hume's or Mr. Gibbon's theory substantiated by a dry romance, until Mr. Somebody Else comes and writes the romance in his way, the facts being pliable, and equally available for both. Accordingly, Mitford's "*History of Greece*" is aristocratical principles demonstrated from Grecian history, and Connop Thilwall's is democratical principles proved from the same facts, and Alison's history "*is Mr. Wordy's account of the French revolution in twenty volumes, written to show that Providence was always on the side of the Tories,*" as Coningsby's friend assured him. I do believe there was great wisdom in Marlborough's saying, that the only English history he knew, or that was worth knowing, was that written by Shakspeare, for Shakspeare does not give facts, as they occurred

—no, but he gives ideal facts, since the facts cannot be got at.

### BENVENUTO CELLINI, GOLDSMITH, VISIONARY, MANIA

*Frederick W. Robertson to —*

#### I

*January 5, 1853.*

Last evening I began Benvenuto Cellini's "Life," which I had never read before. What a very strange one, and what a strange time it paints! The murder of a man who had slain Cellini's brother in self-defence is related with the utmost coolness, as well as the way in which Pope Clement VII connived at it. Certainly, an artist's life does not appear one conducing to moral excellence; Cellini was a most ungovernable, vain, passionate man, unrestrained by any rule except his own feelings; yet he seems to have been an intimate friend of Michael Angelo—a right noble man. If Cellini is to be believed, he killed the Constable Bourbon with his own hand, and almost singly defended the Castle of St. Angelo, besides a number of other wonders, any one of which would be sufficient to make a life famous. His profligacy, too, seems to have been without measure. Such books do not amuse me as they do most people. They set me thinking, and most painfully bewildering, and entangling the skein of life and human destinies hopelessly. In the midst of it all religion comes in from time to time—and the names of God and Christ as objects of supposed, and, I conceive, sincere worship, jarring, however, upon the sense of fitness, like the Messiah between two thieves, as if He had been their accomplice. What is one to make of it all, and how judge of this strange world, which becomes to me more unintelligible every day?

## II

I am proceeding with Cellini's "Life." What a wonderful picture of human life, and human heart, and human society ! The *naïve* and inordinate vanity of the man is astonishing, and refutes the foolish popular notion that real talent is never vain, and real courage never boastful. Falstaff's braggadocio is modest in comparison of his. Conceive a man gravely telling you that after the vision in his prison a glory encircled his head through life—visible on his shadow, especially on the dewy grass at morning, and which he possessed the power of showing to a chosen few. And then the religiosity and hymn-writing of a man who records, in admiration, the murder in revenge of three separate persons who had slightly offended him. Very curious, too, is his account of the unblushing rapacity, violence, and profligacy of the Popes Clement and Paul III, to say nothing of the villainy of the cardinals, bishops, and Dukes of Ferrara. It was a curious time when men had to redress their own wrongs, and goldsmiths were compelled to be accomplished swordsmen if they would live one day in safety. Fancy Mr. Lewis armed *cap-à-pie*, or a tailor coming to measure you with a sword on his thigh ! Yet a dusky clouded sense of right, honour, and religion runs through the book : *bizarre* enough, it is true, and suggestive of many reflections. Society progresses—do men ? Benvenuto gratified every passion, slashed and slew his way through life. London jewellers wear no swords, and get rich by bankruptcies ; is the gain very great, are we not less of men than in those days ?

It is a wonderfully graphic life. That power of painting what was seen and what appeared, instead

of our modern habit of reflecting and philosophising upon it, brings the whole scene before the eyes. How living and real, as if of yesterday, the portraits of Francis I, Madame D'Estampes, Titian. And how curious, as compared with Rousseau and Tasso, is Cellini's perpetual discovery of conspiracies against himself, and of the implacable enmities of popes, dukes, ladies ! The imaginativeness of a brain which had in it a fibre of insanity, near which genius often lies, would, I suppose, account for two-thirds of this—and his extraordinary irascibility was but another form of it. An innkeeper, whose horse he had over-ridden, keeps his saddle and bridle in retaliation, and Cellini sets off and buries his dagger in the spine of his neck. Another man affronts him slightly, and he resolves to cut off his arm ; then his mad escape from prison with the ingenuity of a maniac ; the descent by sheets, curiously procured, cut in strips, and the desperate fall and fractured leg ; all to escape from a Pope, who was trying to murder him in the most incredible ways—it is very curious.

### III

What a long dreary vista of many months of pain opens out before me. Was that a good omen—just as I wrote those words a sudden gleam of sunshine burst out of this gloomy day upon my paper ? Ben-venu to Cellini would have taken it for a special prediction vouchsafed from heaven, yet it would have made him not a whit the better man. What I miss exceedingly is any religious aspiration through all his book. Convictions of Heaven's personal favour and favouritism are expressed in abundance, but I do not think those religious, in the true sense of the

word. In a lower sense, perhaps, they are: at least, a feeling of Divine and personal sympathy is indispensable to religion—perhaps one of its bases; but the other basis—a belief in and aspiration after what is high, beautiful, and good—is the more solid and the less misused basis of the two; and this you do not find in Cellini's art as in Michael Angelo's, Canova's, Beethoven's—no effort at expressing a something unearthly, which is the true province of imagination.

I think it would be an interesting thing to work out that thought: How far religion has those two sides—the sense of Personality, including sympathy, and the sense of an abstract Beauty, and Right and Good—the one, if alone, producing superstition and fanaticism, or else the mysticism of the Guyon school; the other, if alone, producing mere ethics or mere statesmanship.

#### THE NEW NOVELISTS CONTRASTED WITH THE OLD

*Frederick W. Robertson to ——*

Cheltenham, *Spring, 1853.*

Light reading and visiting old acquaintances have been my sole occupation here. I have finished "Ruth" and "Villette," and several of Sir Walter Scott's, and am much struck by the marked difference between the fiction of his day and ours; the effect produced is very opposite. From those of Scott you rise with a vigorous, healthy tone of feeling; from the others, with that sense of exhaustion and weakness which comes from feeling stirred up to end in nothing. Scott's narratives run smoothly on with a profusion of information respecting the outer life of the days

which he describes—the manners, customs, dress, modes of thought, and general feeling ; but you have no glances into the inner life—no throes and convulsions of conscience—no conflicts of Duty with Inclination—no mysteries of a soul treading wilfully ? or compelled by circumstances, the dangerous, narrow border-land between right and wrong. Partly this is accounted for by the fact that in his stirring times life was an outer thing, and men were not forced into those mysterious problems which are pressing for solution now ; and partly by another fact, that women have since then taken the lead in the world of literature and imparted to fiction a new character. They are trying to *aborder* questions which men had looked upon as settled ; and this might have been expected, from their being less able to understand or recognise the authority of statute law and conventional moralities than men, and much less disposed to acknowledge their eternal obligation, and also much more quick to feel the stirring laws of nature—mysterious, dim, but yet, in their way, even more sacred. The result of this has been, that questions which men would rather have left unexamined, or else approached with coarseness, are now the staple subjects of our modern fiction—“Jane Eyre,” “Villette,” “Ruth,” and many things in Margaret Fuller’s writings ; these, with the works of several American writers, as Hawthorne, in whom, though men, the woman movement has worked deeply, are the most remarkable of our modern novels, and characterise the commencement of an epoch. That great question, how far conventional law is to stifle the workings of inclination, and how far inclination—supposing it to be sacred and from our higher nature—is justified in bidding it defiance, what a wide field that opens !

It is a perilous question, and opens a door for boundless evil as well as good.

The French writers have said, as usual, with the full licence of a nation to whom Duty has no meaning, that the door is to be wide as hell ; "Evil, be thou my good," seems to be the watchword of those that I have read. If they are right, God is a Being whose existence is as superfluous as a devil's. A sense of horrible materialism steals over me in reading their attempts to solve the problem, and the laws of materialism seem the only ones left to guide man. The "constitution of man" must replace the prophets, and a study of the cerebral laws of organisation sweep away the sanctions both of the Law and the Gospel. Mesmerism and Electro-biology must take the place of the New Testament, and *les beaux sentiments* become our compass instead of the Book of Life. Happily, the English novelists have approached the question with purer instincts and a more severely moral tone—witness "Jane Eyre" and "Ruth"; and yet they do open the question, and I rejoice to see it opened: yes, and more—opened by women, for I despair of men ever doing it with justice. The new divorce law, as proposed, refuses to the woman, the right to divorce her husband, let his crimes be what they may, unless he adds brutal ill-treatment of her to crime. What hope is there from such a social state of feeling?

The worst, however, of the new tone in novel-writing is, that it sets one thinking in a way that can find no vent in action, and makes one dissatisfied with existing errors and institutions, without the slightest possibility of altering them; nay, or even knowing what alteration to desire. The result of this becoming general, may, perhaps, produce a rest-

lessness which will issue in improvement ; meantime, each must be content to bear his share of the unsatisfied restlessness which is hereafter to find such issue.

“ THE FAULT OF ALL GERMAN CULTURE AND THE  
WEAKNESS OF ALL GERMAN GENIUS ”

*Sidney Lanier to his Wife*

New York, *Sunday, October 18, 1874.*

I have been in my room all day ; and have just concluded a half-dozen delicious hours, during which I have been devouring with a hungry ferocity of rapture which I know not how to express, “ The Life of Robert Schumann,” by his pupil, von Wasielewski. The pupil, I am sure, did not fully comprehend his great master. I think the key to Schumann’s whole character, with all its labyrinthine and often disappointing peculiarities, is this : That he had no mode of self-expression, or, I should rather say, of self-expansion, besides the musical mode. This may seem a strange remark to make of him who was the founder and prolific editor of a great musical journal and who perhaps exceeded any musician of his time in general culture. But I do not mean that he was confined to music for self-expression, though indeed, the sort of critical writing which Schumann did so much of is not at all like poetry in its tranquillizing effect upon the soul of the writer. What I do mean is that his sympathies were not *big* enough, he did not go through the awful struggle of genius, and lash and storm and beat about until his soul was grown large enough to embrace the whole of life and the All of things, that is, large enough to appreciate (if

even without understanding) the magnificent designs of God, and tall enough to stand in the trough of the awful cross-waves of circumstance and look over their heights along the whole sea of God's manifold acts, and deep enough to admit the peace that passeth understanding. This is, indeed, the fault of all German culture, and the weakness of all German genius. A great artist should have the sensibility and expressive genius of Schumann, the calm grandeur of Lee, the human breadth of Shakspeare, all in one.

Now in this particular, of being open, unprejudiced, and unenvious, Schumann soars far above his brother Germans; he valiantly defended our dear Chopin, and other young musicians who were struggling to make head against the abominable pettiness of German prejudice. But, withal, I cannot find that his life was great, as a whole: I cannot see him caring for his land, for the poor, for religion, for humanity: he was always a restless soul; and the ceaseless wear of incompleteness finally killed, as a maniac, him whom a broader Love might have kept alive as a glorious artist to this day.

The truth is, the world does not require enough at the hands of genius. Under the special plea of greater sensibilities, and of consequent greater temptations, it excuses its gifted ones, and even sometimes makes "a law of their weakness." But this is wrong: the sensibility of genius is just as much greater to high emotions as to low ones; and whilst it subjects to stronger temptations, it at the same time interposes—if it *will*—stronger considerations for resistance.

These are scarcely fair things to be saying *apropos* of Robert Schumann; for I do not think he was ever guilty of any excesses of genius—as they are called: I only mean them to apply to the *unrest* of his life.

—And yet, for all I have said, how his music does burn in my soul ! It stretches me upon the very rack of delight ; I know no musician that fills me so full of heavenly anguish, and if I had to give up all the writers of music save one, my one should be Robert Schumann.

VII  
Rhymed Epistles

“ What things have we seen  
Done at the ‘ *Mermaid* ’ ! ”

*Francis Beaumont (1584-1616)*

A reply to a Christmas invitation.

*Oliver Goldsmith (1728-1774)*

The news at Olney.

*William Cowper (1731-1800)*

“ The heart ay’s the part ay,  
That makes us right or wrang.”

*Robert Burns (1759-1796)*

Enchanted.

*John Keats (1795-1821)*

Winter forenoons in the Parliament House.

*Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-1894)*

“ WHAT THINGS HAVE WE SEEN  
DONE AT THE ‘ MERMAID ’ ! ”

*Master Francis Beaumont’s Letter to Ben Jonson*

[“ *Written before he and Master Fletcher came to London, with two of the precedent comedies, then not finished, which deferred their merry meeting at the Mermaid.* ”]

The sun (which doth the greatest comfort bring  
To absent friends, because the selfsame thing  
They know, they see, however absent) is  
Here our best hay-maker (forgive me this ;  
It is our country’s style) : in this warm shine  
I lie, and dream of your full Mermaid wine.  
Oh, we have water mixed with claret lees,  
Drink apt to bring in drier heresies  
Than beer, good only for the sonnet’s strain,  
With fustian metaphors to stuff the brain ;  
So mixed that, given to the thirstiest one,  
’Twill not prove alms, unless he have the stone :  
I think with one draught man’s invention fades,  
Two cups had quite spoiled Homer’s *Iliads* ;  
’Tis liquor that will find out Sutcliffe’s wit :  
Lie where he will, and make him write worse yet :  
Filled with such moisture, in most grievous qualms,  
Did Robert Wisdom write his singing psalms ;  
And so must I do this ; and yet I think  
It is a potion sent us down to drink,

By special Providence, keeps us from fights,  
Makes us not laugh when we make legs to knights ;  
'Tis this that keeps our minds fit for our states,  
A medicine to obey our magistrates ;  
For we do live more free than you ; no hate,  
No envy at one another's happy state,  
Moves us ; we are all equal ; every whit  
Of land, that God gives men here is their wit,  
If we consider fully ; for our best  
And gravest man will with his main house-jest  
Scarce please you ; we want subtilty to do  
The city tricks, lie, hate, and flatter too ;  
Here are none that can bear a painted show,  
Strike when you wince, and then lament the blow :  
Who, like mills set the right way for to grind,  
Can make their grain alike with every wind ;  
Only some fellows, with the subtlest pate  
Amongst us, may perchance equivocate  
At selling of a horse, and that's the most ;  
Methinks the little wit I had is lost  
Since I saw you ; for wit is like a rest  
Held up at tennis, which men do the best  
With the best gamesters. What things have we seen  
Done at the *Mermaid* ! heard words that have been  
So nimble, and so full of subtle flame,  
As if that every one from whence they came  
Had meant to put his whole wit in a jest,  
And had resolved to live a fool the rest  
Of his dull life ; then where there hath been thrown  
Wit able enough to justify the town  
For three days past : wit that might warrant be  
For the whole city to talk foolishly,  
Till that were cancelled ; and when that was gone,  
We left an air behind us, which alone  
Was able to make the next two companies

Right witty ; though but downright fools, more wise :  
When I remember this, and see that now  
The country gentlemen begin to allow  
My wit for dry bobs, then I needs must cry,  
I see my days of ballating grow nigh ;  
I can already riddle, and can sing  
Catches, sell bargains, and I fear shall bring  
Myself to speak the hardest word I find  
Over as oft as any, with one wind  
That takes no medicines. But one thought of thee  
Makes me remember all these things to be  
The wit of our young men, fellows that shew  
No part of good, yet utter all they know ;  
Who, like trees of the gard, have growing souls.  
Only strong Destiny, which all controls,  
I hope hath left a better fate in store  
For me, thy friend, than to live ever poor,  
Banished unto this home. Fate once again  
Bring me to thee, who canst make smooth and plain  
The way of knowledge for me, and then I  
Who have no good but in thy company,  
Protest it will my greatest comfort be  
To acknowledge all I have to flow from thee.  
Ben, when these scenes are perfect, we'll taste wine ;  
I'll drink thy Muse's health, thou shalt quaff mine.

## A REPLY TO A CHRISTMAS INVITATION

*Oliver Goldsmith to Mrs. Bunbury*<sup>1</sup>

MADAM,—

*December, 1772.*

I read your letter with all that allowance which critical candour could require, but after all find so

<sup>1</sup> Whose sister was Mary Horneck, known amongst her friends as the *Jessamy Bride*, with whom Goldsmith is supposed to have been in love.

much to object to, and so much to raise my indignation, that I cannot help giving it a serious answer.—I am not so ignorant, madam, as not to see there are many sarcasms contained in it, and solecisms also. (Solecism is a word that comes from the town of Solecis in Attica, among the Greeks, built by Solon, and applied as we use the word Kidderminster for curtains from a town also of that name—but this is learning you have no taste for !)—I say, madam, there are many sarcasms in it, and solecisms also. But not to seem an ill-natured critic, I'll take leave to quote your own words, and give you my remarks upon them as they occur. You begin as follows :

I hope, my good Doctor, you soon will be here,  
And your spring-velvet coat very smart will appear,  
To open our ball the first day of the year.

Pray, madam, where did you ever find the epithet “good” applied to the title of doctor ? Had you called me “learned doctor,” or “grave doctor,” or “noble doctor,” it might be allowable, because they belong to the profession. But, not to cavil at trifles, you talk of my “spring-velvet coat,” and advise me to wear it the first day in the year, that is, in the middle of winter !—a spring-velvet coat in the middle of winter !!! That would be a solecism indeed ! and yet, to increase the inconsistence, in another part of your letter, you call me a beau. Now, on one side or other you must be wrong. If I am a beau, I can never think of wearing a spring-velvet in winter ; and if I am not a beau, why then, that explains itself. But let me go on to your two next strange lines :

And bring with you a wig, that is modish and gay,  
To dance with the girls that are makers of hay.

The absurdity of making hay at Christmas you yourself seem sensible of: you say your sister will laugh; and so indeed she well may! The Latins have an expression for a contemptuous kind of laughter, *naso contemnere adunco*; that is, to laugh with a crooked nose. She may laugh at you in the manner of the ancients if she thinks fit. But now I come to the most extraordinary of all extraordinary propositions, which is, to take your and your sister's advice in playing at loo. The presumption of the offer raises my indignation beyond the bounds of prose; it inspires me at once with verse and resentment. I take advice? and from whom? You shall hear:

First let me suppose, what may shortly be true,  
The company set, and the word to be Loo:  
All smirking, and pleasant, and big with adventure,  
And ogling the stake which is fixed in the centre.  
Round and round go the cards, while I inwardly damn  
At never once finding a visit from Pam.  
I lay down my stake, apparently cool,  
While the harpies about me all pocket the pool.  
I fret in my gizzard, yet, cautious and sly,  
I wish all my friends may be bolder than I:  
Yet still they sit snug, not a creature will aim  
By losing their money to venture at fame. . . .  
'What does Mrs. Bunbury?' . . . 'I, Sir? I pass.'  
'Pray what does Miss Horneck? take courage, come,  
do.'  
'Who, I? let me see, Sir, why I must pass too.'  
Mr. Bunbury frets, and I fret like the devil,  
To see them so cowardly, lucky, and civil.  
Yet still I sit snug, and continue to sigh on,  
Till, made by my losses as bold as a lion,

I venture at all, while my avarice regards  
The whole pool as my own . . . 'Come, give me five  
cards.'

'Well done!' cry the ladies: 'Ah, Doctor, that's  
good!'

The pool's very rich, . . . ah! the Doctor is loo'd!  
Thus foil'd in my courage, on all sides perplext,  
I ask for advice from the lady that's next.

'Pray, ma'am, be so good as to give your advice:  
Don't you think the best way is to venture for't  
twice?'

'I advise,' cries the lady, 'to try it, I own. . . .'

'Ah! the Doctor is loo'd! Come, Doctor, put down.'  
Thus, playing and playing, I still grow more eager,  
And so bold, and so bold, I'm at last a bold beggar.  
Now, ladies, I ask, if law matters you're skill'd in,  
Whether crimes such as yours should not come before  
Fielding

For giving advice that is not worth a straw,  
May well be call'd picking of pockets in law;  
And picking of pockets, with which I now charge ye,  
Is, by quinto Elizabeth, Death without Clergy.

What justice, when both to the Old Bailey brought!  
By the gods, I'll enjoy it, though 'tis but in thought!  
Both are placed at the bar, with all proper decorum,  
With bunches of fennel, and nosegays before 'em;  
Both cover their faces with mobs and all that,  
But the judge bids them, angrily, take off their hat.  
When uncover'd, a buzz of inquiry runs round,

'Pray what are their crimes?' . . . 'They've been  
pilfering found.'

'But pray who have they pilfer'd?' . . . 'A doctor,  
I hear.'

'What, yon solemn-faced, odd-looking man that stands  
near?'

that she and her bard have little regard for the taste and fashions, and ruling passions, and hoidening play, of the modern day ; and though she assume a borrowed plume, and now and then wear a tittering air, 'tis only her plan to catch if she can the giddy and gay, as they go that way, by a production on a new construction. She has baited her trap in hopes to snap all that may come with a sugar-plum."—

His opinion in this will not be amiss ; 'tis what I intend, my principal end ; and if I succeed, and folks should read, till a few are brought to a serious thought,

shall think I am paid for all I have said and all I  
ve done, though I have run, many a time, after a  
rhyme, as far as from hence to the end of my sense,  
and by hook or crook, write another book, if I live  
and am here, another year. I have heard before, of  
a room with a floor laid upon springs and such like  
things, with so much art, in every part, that when  
you went in, you was forced to begin a minuet pace,  
with an air and a grace, swimming about, now in and  
now out, with a deal of state, in a figure of eight,  
without pipe or string, or any such thing ; and now  
I have writ, in a rhyming fit, what will make you  
dance, and as you advance, will keep you still, though  
against your will, dancing away, alert and gay, till  
you come to an end of what I penn'd ; which that  
you may do ere Madam and you are quite worn out  
with jigging about, I take my leave, and here you  
receive a bow profound, down to the ground, from  
your humble me—

W. C.

P.S.—When I concluded, doubtless you did think  
me right, as well you might, in saying what I said of  
Scott ; and then it was true, but now it is due to him  
to note, that since I wrote, himself and he has visited  
we.

“ THE HEART AY’S THE PART AY,  
THAT MAKES US RIGHT OR WRANG ”

*Robert Burns to Davie, a Brother Poet*

January, 1784.

I

While winds frae aff Ben-Lomond blaw,  
And bar the doors wi’ drivin’ snaw,  
And hing us owre the ingle,  
I set me down to pass the time,  
And spin a verse or twa o’ rhyme,  
In hamely, westlin jingle :  
While frosty winds blaw in the drift,  
Ben to the chimla lug,  
I grudge a wee the great-folk’s gift,  
That live sae bien an’ snug :  
I tent less, and want less  
Their roomy fire-side ;  
But hanker, and canker,  
To see their cursed pride.

II

It’s hardly in a body’s pow’r,  
To keep, at times, frae being sour,  
To see how things are shar’d ;  
How best o’ chiels are whyles in want,  
While coofs on countless thousands rant,  
And ken na how to ware’t ;  
But Davie, lad, ne’er fash your head,  
Tho’ we hae little gear ;  
We’re fit to win our daily bread  
As lang’s we’re hale and fier  
“ Mair spier na, nor fear na,”  
Auld age ne’er mind a feg ;

The last o't, the wärst o't,  
Is only but to beg.

## III

To lie in kilns and barns at e'en,  
When banes are craz'd, and bluid is thin,  
Is, doubtless, great distress !  
Yet then content could make us blest ;  
Ev'n then, sometimes, we'd snatch a taste]  
Of truest happiness.  
The honest heart that's free frae a'  
Intended fraud or guile,  
However Fortune kick the ba',  
Has ay some cause to smile :  
And mind still, you'll find still,  
A comfort this nae sma' ;  
Nae mair then, we'll care then,  
Nae farther can we fa'.

## IV

What tho', like commoners of air,  
We wander out, we know not where.  
But either house or hal' ?  
Yet Nature's charms, the hills and woods,  
The sweeping vales, and foaming floods,  
Are free alike to all.  
In days when daisies deck the ground,  
And blackbirds whistle clear,  
With honest joy our hearts will bound,  
To see the coming year :  
On braes when we please then,  
We'll sit an' sowth a tune ;  
Syne rhyme till't we'll time till't,  
An' sing't when we hae done.

## V

It's no in titles nor in rank :  
 It's no in wealth like Lon'on Bank,  
     To purchase peace and rest.  
 It's no in makin' muckle, mair ;  
 It's no in books, it's no in lear,  
     To make us truly blest :  
 If happiness hae not her seat  
     An' centre in the breast,  
 We may be wise, or rich, or great,  
     But never can be blest !  
 Nae treasures nor pleasures  
     Could make us happy lang ;  
 The heart ay's the part ay  
     That makes us right or wrang.

## VI

Think ye, that sic as you and I,  
 Wha drudge and drive thro' wet and dry,  
     Wi' never ceasing toil ;  
 Think ye, are we less blest than they,  
 Wha scarcely tent us in their way,  
     As hardly worth their while ?  
 Alas ! how oft, in haughty mood,  
     God's creatures they oppress !  
 Or else, neglecting a' that's guid,  
     They riot in excess !  
 Baith careless and fearless  
     Of either Heaven or Hell ;  
 Esteeming and deeming  
     It a' an idle tale !

## VII

Then let us cheerfu' acquiesce,  
 Nor make our scanty pleasures less

By pining at our state :  
 And, even should misfortunes come,  
 I here wha sit hae met wi' some,  
 An's thankfu' for them yet,  
 They gie the wit of age to youth ;  
 They let us ken oursel' ;  
 They make us see the naked truth  
 The real guid and ill :  
 Tho' losses and crosses  
 Be lessons right severe,  
 There's wit there, ye'll get there,  
 Ye'll find nae other where.

## VIII

But tent me, Davie, ace o' hearts !  
 (To say aught less wad wrang the cartes,  
 And flatt'ry I detest)  
 This life has joys for you and I ;  
 And joys that riches ne'er could buy,  
 And joys the very best.  
 There's a' the pleasures o' the heart,  
 The lover an' the frien' :  
 Ye hae your Meg, your dearest part,  
 And I my darling Jean !  
 It warms me, it charms me  
 To mention but her name :  
 It heats me, it beets me,  
 And sets me a' on flame !

## IX

O all ye Pow'rs who rule above !  
 O Thou whose very self art love !  
 Thou know'st my words sincere !  
 The life-blood streaming thro' my heart,

Or my more dear immortal part,  
 Is not more fondly dear !  
 When heart-corroding care and grief  
 Deprive my soul of rest,  
 Her dear idea brings relief  
 And solace to my breast.  
 Thou Being All-seeing,  
 O, hear my fervent pray'r !  
 Still take her, and make her  
 Thy most peculiar care !

## x

All hail ! ye tender feelings dear !  
 The smile of love, the friendly tear,  
 The sympathetic glow !  
 Long since, this world's thorny ways  
 Had number'd out my weary days,  
 Had it not been for you !  
 Fate has still blest me with a friend  
 In every care and ill ;  
 And oft a more endearing band,  
 A tie more tender still.  
 It lightens, it brightens  
 The tenebrific scene,  
 To meet with, and greet with  
 My Davie or my Jean !

## xi

O, how that Name inspires my style !  
 The words come skelpin' rank an' file,  
 Amaist before I ken !  
 The ready measure rins as fine,  
 As Phœbus and the famous Nine  
 Were glowrin' owre my pen.

My spaviet Pegasus will limp,  
Till ance he's fairly het ;  
And then he'll hilch, an' stilt, an' jimp,  
And rin an unco fit ;  
But least then, the beast then  
Should rue this hasty ride,  
I'll light now, and dight now  
His sweaty, wizen'd hide.

## ENCHANTED

*John Keats to John Hamilton Reynolds*  
Little Britain, London

Teignmouth,  
25 March, 1818.

MY DEAR REYNOLDS,

In hopes of cheering you through a Minute or two, I was determined will he nill he to send you some lines, so you will excuse the unconnected subject and careless verse. You know, I am sure, Claude's Enchanted Castle, and I wish you may be pleased with my remembrance of it. The Rain is come on again—I think with me Devonshire stands a very poor chance. I shall damn it up hill and down dale; if it keep up to the average of six fine days in three weeks. Let me have better news of you.

Tom's remembrances to you. Remember us to all.

Your affectionate friend,  
JOHN KEATS.

Dear Reynolds ! as last night I lay in bed, There came before my eyes that wonted thread Of shapes, and shadows, and remembrances, That every other minute vex and please :

Things all disjointed come from north and south,  
 Two Witch's eyes above a Cherub's mouth,  
 Voltaire with casque and shield and habergeon,  
 And Alexander with his nightcap on ;  
 Old Socrates a-tying his cravat,  
 And Hazlitt playing with Miss Edgeworth's cat ;  
 And Junius Brutus, pretty well so so,  
 Making the best of 's way towards Soho.

Few are there who escape these visitings,—  
 Perhaps one or two whose lives have patent wings,  
 And thro' whose curtains peeps no hellish nose,  
 No wild-boar tushes, and no Mermaid's toes ;  
 But flowers bursting out with lusty pride,  
 And young *Æolian* harps personify'd ;  
 Some Titian colours touch'd into real life,—  
 The sacrifice goes on ; the pontiff knife  
 Gleams in the Sun, the milk-white heifer lows,  
 The pipes go shrilly, the libation flows :  
 A white sail shows above the green-head cliff,  
 Moves round the point, and throws her anchor stiff ;  
 The mariners join hymn with those on land.

You know the Enchanted Castle—it doth stand  
 Upon a rock, on the border of a Lake,  
 Nested in trees, which all do seem to shake  
 From some old magic-like Urganda's Sword.  
 O Phœbus ! that I had thy sacred word  
 To show this Castle, in fair dreaming wise,  
 Unto my friend, while sick and ill he lies !

You know it well enough, where it doth seem  
 A mossy place, a Merlin's Hall, a dream ;  
 You know the clear Lake, and the little Isles,  
 The mountains blue, and cold near neighbour rills,

All which elsewhere are but half animate ;  
There do they look alive to love and hate,  
To smiles and frowns ; they seem a lifted mound  
Above some giant, pulsing underground.

Part of the Building was a chosen See,  
Built by a banish'd Santon of Chaldee ;  
The other part, two thousand years from him,  
Was built by Cuthbert de Saint Aldebrim ;  
Then there's a little wing, far from the Sun,  
Built by a Lapland Witch turn'd maudlin Nun ;  
And many other juts of aged stone  
Founded with many a mason-devil's groan.

The doors all look as if they op'd themselves  
The windows as if latch'd by Fays and Elves,  
And from them comes a silver flash of light,  
As from the westward of a Summer's night ;  
Or like a beauteous woman's large blue eyes  
Gone mad thro' olden songs and poesies.

See ! what is coming from the distance dim !  
A Golden Galley all in silken trim !  
Three rows of oars are lightening, moment whiles,  
Into the verd'rous bosoms of those isles ;  
Towards the shade, under the Castle wall,  
It comes in silence,—now 'tis hidden all.  
The Clarion sounds, and from the Postern-gate  
An echo of sweet music doth create  
A fear in the poor Herdsman, who ~~lath~~ bring  
His beasts to trouble the enchanted spring,—  
He tells of the sweet music, and the spot,  
To all his friends, and they believe him not.

O that our dreamings all, of sleep or wake,  
Would all their colours from the sunset take :

From something of material sublime,  
Rather than shadow our own soul's day-time  
In the dark void of night. For in the world  
We jostle,—but my flag is not unfurl'd  
On the Admiral-staff,—and so philosophize  
I dare not yet ! Oh, never will the prize,  
High reason, and the love of good and ill,  
Be my award ! Things cannot to the will  
Be settled, but they tease us out of thought ;  
Or is it that imagination brought  
Beyond its proper bound, yet still confin'd,  
Lost in a sort of Purgatory blind,  
Cannot refer to any standard law  
Of either earth or heaven ? It is a flaw  
In happiness, to see beyond our bourn,—  
It forces us in summer skies to mourn,  
It spoils the singing of the Nightingale.

Dear Reynolds ! I have a mysterious tale,  
And cannot speak it ; the first page I read  
Upon a Lampit rock of green sea-weed  
Among the breakers ; 'twas a quiet eve,  
The rocks were silent, the wide sea did weave  
An untumultuous fringe of silver foam  
Along the flat brown sand ; I was at home  
And should have been most happy,—but I saw  
Too far into the sea, where every maw  
The greater on the less feeds evermore.—  
But I saw too distinct into the core  
Of an eternal fierce destruction,  
And so from happiness I far was gone.  
Still am I sick of it, and tho', to-day,  
I've gather'd young spring-leaves, and flowers gay  
Of periwinkle and wild strawberry,  
Still do I that most fierce destruction see,—

The Shark at savage prey,—the Hawk at pounce,—  
 The gentle Robin, like a Pard or Ounce,  
 Ravening a worm,—Away, ye horrid moods !  
 Moods of one's mind ! You know I hate them well.  
 You know I'd sooner be a clapping Bell  
 To some Kamtschatcan Missionary Church,  
 Than with these horrid moods be left i' the lurch.

## WINTER FORENOONS IN THE PARLIAMENT HOUSE

*Robert Louis Stevenson to Charles Baxter*

[Edinburgh, October, 1875.]

Noo lyart leaves blaw ower the green,  
 Red are the bonnie woods o' Dean,  
 An' here we're back in Embro, freen',  
 To pass the winter,  
 Whilk noo, wi' frosts afore, draws in,  
 An' snaws ahint her.

I've seen's hae days to fricht us a',  
 The Pentlands poothered weel wi' snaw,  
 The ways half-smoored wi' liquid thaw,  
 An' half-congealin',  
 The snell an' scowtherin' norther blaw  
 Frae blae Brunteeelan'.

I've seen's been unco sweir to sally,  
 And at the door-cheeks daff and dally  
 Seen's daidle thus an' shilly-shally  
 For near a minute—  
 Sae cauld the wind blew up the valley,  
 The deil was in it !—

Syne spread the silk an' tak the gate,  
 In blast an' blaudin' rain, deil hae't !  
 The hale toon glintin', stane an' slate,  
 Wi' cauld an' weet,

An' to the Court, gin we'se be late,  
Bicker oor feet.

And at the Court, tae, aft I saw  
Whaur Advocates by twa an' twa  
Gang gesterin' end to end the ha'  
In weeg an' goon,  
To crack o' what ye wull but Law  
The hale forenoon.

That muckle ha', maist like a kirk,  
I've kent at braid mid-day sae mirk  
Ye'd seen white weegs an' faces lurk  
Like ghaists frae Hell,  
But whether Christian ghaists or Turk  
Deil ane could tell.

The three fires lunted in the gloom,  
The wind blew like the blast o' doom,  
The rain upo' the roof abune  
Played Peter Dick—  
Ye wad nae licht enough i' the room  
Your teeth to pick !

But, freend, ye ken how me an' you,  
The ling-lang lanely winter through,  
Keep'd a guid speerit up, an' true  
To lore Horatian,  
We aye the ither bottle drew  
10 inclination.

Sae let us in the comin' days  
Stand sicker on our auncient ways—  
The strauchtest road in a' the maze  
Since Eve ate apples ;  
An' let the winter weet our cla'es—  
We'll weet oor thrapples.

VIII  
Familiar Letters

Arguments against swearing.

*James Howell (1594?-1666)*

An Irishman's impressions of Scotland.

*Oliver Goldsmith (1728-1774)*

"Could a man live by poetry, it were not unpleasant employment  
to be a poet."

*Oliver Goldsmith (1728-1774)*

Recipe for curing the wander-lust.

*Charles Lamb (1775-1835)*

"This is Christmas Day with us."

*Charles Lamb (1775-1835)*

"'Tis such a forlorn hope to send a scrap of paper straggling over  
wide oceans."

*Charles Lamb (1775-1835)*

Boswelliana.

*Lord Macaulay (1800-1859)*

Rajahs, cranks, Virgil, literary good advice, and an entirely new  
method of preventing men from swearing falsely.

*Lord Macaulay (1800-1859)*

From a distant land.

*Mary Taylor (1816-1893)*

Invitation to join in the founding of a Misanthropic Society.

*Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881)*

## ARGUMENTS AGAINST SWEARING

*James Howell to Captain Thomas B.*

York, Aug. 1, 1628.

### NOBLE CAPTAIN

Yours of the 1st of March was delivered me by Sir Richard Scot, and I hold it no profanation of this Sunday evening, considering the quality of my subject, and having—I thank God for it—performed all church duties, to employ some hours to meditate on you, and send you this friendly salute, though I confess in an unusual monitory way. My dear Captain, I love you perfectly well; I love both your person and parts, which are not vulgar; I am in love with your disposition, which is generous, and I verily think you were never guilty of any pusillanimous act in your life. Nor is this love of mine conferred upon you gratis, but you may challenge it as your due, and by way of correspondence, in regard of those thousand convincing evidences you have given me of yours to me, which ascertain me that you take me for a true friend. Now, I am of the number of those that <sup>had</sup> rather commend the virtue of an enemy than soothe your own particular, if your ties were cast into a balance outpoise the other; yet there is one frailty, or reigns in you, which w<sup>ch</sup> swearing in all your dis

but deep far-fetched oaths that you are wont to rap out, which you use as flowers of rhetoric to enforce a faith upon the hearers, who believe you never the more ; and you use this in cold blood when you are not provoked, which makes the humour far more dangerous. I know many—and I cannot say I myself am free from it, God forgive me—that, being transported with choler, and as it were, made drunk with passion by some sudden provoking accident, or extreme ill-fortune at play, will let fall oaths and deep protestations ; but to belch out, and send forth, as it were, whole volleys of oaths and curses in a calm humour, to verify every trivial discourse, is a thing of horror. I know a king that, being crossed in his game, would amongst his oaths fall on the ground, and bite the very earth in the rough of his passion ; I heard of another king—Henry IV of France—that in his highest distemper would swear by “ Ventre de Saint Gris ” (By the belly of St. Gris) ; I heard of an Italian that, having been accustomed to blaspheme, was weaned from it by a pretty wile, for, having been one night at play, and lost all his money, after many execrable oaths, and having offered money to another to go out to face heaven and defy God, he threw himself upon a bed hard by, and there fell asleep. The other gamesters played on still, and finding that he was fast asleep, they put out the candles, and made a semblance to play on still ; they fell a wrangling and spoke so loud that he awaked : he,

he said, tell a rubbing his eyes, and  
ompted him that he was  
judgment had deservedly  
blasphemies, and so he  
. A ghostly father was  
some acts of penance for  
never to play again or

blaspheme, which he did ; and so the candles were lighted again, which he thought were burning all the while ; so he became a perfect convert. I could wish this letter might produce the same effect in you. There is a strong text, that the curse of heaven hangs always over the dwelling of the swearer, and you have more fearful examples of miraculous judgments in this particular, than of any other sin.

There is a little town in Languedoc, in France, that hath a multitude of the pictures of the Virgin Mary up and down ; but she is made to carry Christ in her right arm, contrary to the ordinary custom ; and the reason they told me was this, that two gamesters being at play, and one having lost all his money, and bolted out many blasphemies, he gave a deep oath, that that jade upon the wall, meaning the picture of the blessed Virgin, was the cause of his ill-luck ; hereupon the child removed imperceptibly from the left arm to the right, and the man fell stark dumb ever after ; thus went the tradition there. This makes me think upon the Lady Southwell's news from Utopia, that he who sweareth when he playeth at dice, may challenge his damnation by way of purchase. This infamous custom of swearing, I observe, reigns in England lately more than anywhere else ; though a German in his highest puff of passion swear a hundred thousand sacraments, the Italian by —, the French by God's death, the Spar iard by his flesh, the "ishman by his sweat, the Iri man by his five wounds, though the Scot commonly the devil ha'e his soul, yet, for a variety of oaths English roarers put down all. Consider well what a dangerous thing it is to tear in pieces that divine name, which makes the vast fabric of the world tremble, that holy name wherein the whole kingdom of heaven doth triumph, that blissful name,

consists the fulness of all felicity. I know this custom in you yet is but a light disposition ; 'tis no habit, I hope ; let me, therefore, conjure you by that power, friendship, by that holy league of love which is between us, that you would suppress it, before it come to that ; for I must tell you that those who could find it in their hearts to love you for many other things, do disrespect you for this : they hate your company, and give no credit to whatsoever you say, it being one of the punishments of a swearer, as well as of a liar, not to be believed when he speaks truth.

Excuse me that I am so free with you ; what I write proceeds from the current of a pure affection, and I shall heartily thank you, and take it for an argument of love, if you tell me of my weaknesses, which are—God wot—too, too many ; for my body is but a Cargazon of corrupt humours, and being not able to overcome them all at once, I do endeavour to do it by degrees, like Sertorius his soldier, who, when he could not cut off the horse's tail at one blow with his sword, fell to pull out the hairs one by one. And touching this particular humour from which I dissuade you, it hath raged in me too often by contingent fits, but thank God for it, I find it much abated and purged. Now, the only physic I used was a precedent fast, and recourse to the holy sacrament the next day, of purpose to implore pardon for what had passed, and power for the future

quell those exorbitant motions, those ravings and erish fits of the soul, in regard there are no infirmities more dangerous, for at the same instant they have

they become impieties. And the greatest symptom of amendment I find in me is, because whensoever the holy name of God blasphemed by any other, my heart to tremble within my breast ; now, in intentional rule, that if sins present do not please

thee, sins past will not hurt thee. All other sins have for their object either pleasure or profit, or some aim or satisfaction to body or mind, but this hath none at all ; therefore fie upon 't, my dear Captain ; try whether you can make a conquest of yourself in subduing this execrable custom. Alexander subdued the world, Cæsar his enemies, Hercules monsters, but he that o'ercomes himself is the true valiant captain.

## AN IRISHMAN'S IMPRESSIONS OF SCOTLAND

*Oliver Goldsmith to Robert Bryanton*

Edinburgh, September 26th, 1753.

MY DEAR BOB,

How many good excuses (and you know I was ever good at an excuse) might I call up to vindicate my past shameful silence ? I might tell how I wrote a long letter on my first coming hither, and seem vastly angry at my not receiving an answer ; I might allege that business (with business you know I was always pestered) had never given me time to finger a pen. But I suppress those and twenty more as plausible, and as easily invented, since they might be attended with a slight inconvenience of being known to be lies. Let me speak truth. An hereditary indolence (I have it from the mother's side) has hitherto prevented my writing to you, and still prevents my writing a least twenty-five letters more, due to my friends Ireland. No turn-spit-dog gets up into his wheel w more reluctance than I sit down to write ; yet ne ever loved the roast meat he ter than him I now address.

Yet what shall I say no ed ?  
tire you with a descriptio ful

where I must lead you over their hills all brown with heath, or their valleys scarcely able to feed a rabbit ? Man alone seems to be the only creature who has arrived to the natural size in this poor soil. Every part of the country presents the same dismal landscape. No grove, nor brook, lend their music to cheer the stranger, or make the inhabitants forget their poverty. Yet with all these disadvantages to call him down to humility, a Scotchman is one of the proudest things alive. The poor have pride ever ready to relieve them. If mankind should happen to despise them, they are masters of their own admiration ; and that they can plentifully bestow upon themselves.

From their pride and poverty, as I take it, results one advantage this country enjoys ; namely, the gentlemen here are much better bred than among us. No such character here as our fox-hunters ; and they have expressed great surprise when I informed them, that some men in Ireland of one thousand pounds a year spend their whole lives in running after a hare, and drinking to be drunk. Truly, if such a being, equipped in his hunting dress, came among a circle of Scotch gentry, they would behold him with the same astonishment that a countryman does King George on horseback.

The men here have generally high cheek bones, and are lean and swarthy, fond of action, dancing in particular. Now that I have mentioned dancing, let me say something of their dances, which are very frequent here.

hen a stranger enters the dancing-hall, he sees one of the room taken up by the ladies, who sit dispersed in a group, themselves;—in the other end stand two persons, a man and a woman, who are to be the partners;—but no more than two persons are to be admitted in the hall, and the ladies indeed may ogle,

and the gentlemen sigh ; but an embargo is laid on any closer commerce. At length, to interrupt hostilities, the lady directress, or intendant, or what you will, pitches upon a lady and gentleman to walk a minuet ; which they perform with a formality that approaches to despondence. After five or six couples have thus walked the gauntlet, all stand up to country dances ; each gentleman furnished with a partner from the aforesaid lady directress ; so they dance much, say nothing, and thus concludes our assembly. I told a Scotch gentleman that such profound silence resembled the ancient procession of the Roman matrons in honour of Ceres ; and the Scotch gentleman told me (and, faith, I believe he was right) that I was a very great pedant for my pains.

Now I am come to the ladies ; and to show that I love Scotland, and everything that belongs to so charming a country, I insist on it, and will give him leave to break my head that denies it—that the Scotch ladies are ten thousand times finer and handsomer than the Irish. To be sure, now, I see your sisters Betty and Peggy vastly surprised at my partiality—but tell them flatly, I don't value them—or their fine skins, or eyes, or good sense or—, a potato ;—for I say, and will maintain it ; and as a convincing proof (I am in a great passion) of what I assert, the Scotch ladies say it themselves. But to be serious ; where will you find a language so prettily become a pretty mouth as the broad Scotch ? and the women here speak it in its highest purity ; for instance, teach one of your young ladies at home to pronounce, the “ Whoar wull I gong ? ” with a becoming widening of mouth, and I'll lay my life they'll wound every hearer.

We have no such character here as a coquet, bras alas ! how many envious prudes ! Some days a

I walked into my Lord Kilcoubry's <sup>1</sup> (don't be surprised, my lord is but a glover), when the Duchess of Hamilton (that fair who sacrificed her beauty to her ambition, and her inward peace to a title and gilt equipage) passed by in her chariot ; her battered husband, or more properly the guardian of her charms, sat by her side. Straight envy began, in the shape of no less than three ladies who sat with me, to find faults in her faultless form.—“ For my part,” says the first, “ I think what I always thought, that the Duchess has too much of the red in her complexion.” “ Madam, I am of your opinion,” says the second ; “ I think her face has a palish cast too much on the delicate order.” “ And, let me tell you,” added the third lady, whose mouth was puckered up to the size of an issue, “ that the Duchess has fine lips, but she wants a mouth.” —At this every lady drew up her mouth as if going to pronounce the letter P.

But how ill, my Bob, does it become me to ridicule women with whom I have scarcely any correspondence ! There are, 'tis certain, handsome women here ; and 'tis certain they have handsome men to keep them company. An ugly and poor man is society only for himself ; and such society the world lets me enjoy in great abundance. Fortune has given you circumstances, and nature to look charming in the eyes of the fair. Nor do I envy my dear Bob such blessings, while I may sit down and laugh <sup>at</sup> the world and myself —the most ridiculous object in it. But you see I am grown downright splenetic, and perhaps the fit may continue till I receive an answer to this. I know you

<sup>1</sup> William Maclellan, who claimed the title, and whose son succeeded in establishing the claim in 1773. The father is said to have voted at the election of the sixteen Peers of Scotland ; and to have sold gloves in the lobby at this ~~and~~ public assemblages.

cannot send me much news from Ballymahon, but such as it is, send it all ; everything you send will be agreeable to me.

Has George Conway put up a sign yet ; or John Fineely left off drinking drams ; or Tom Allen got a new wig ? But I leave you to your own choice what to write. While I live, know you have a true friend in yours, etc., etc., etc.,

OLIVER GOLDSMITH.

PS.—Give my sincere respects (not compliments, do you mind) to your agreeable family, and give my service to my mother, if you see her ; for, as you express it in Ireland, I have a sneaking kindness for her still. Direct to me, ——, Student in Physic, in Edinburgh.

“ COULD A MAN LIVE BY POETRY, IT WERE NOT  
UNPLEASANT EMPLOYMENT TO BE A POET.”

*Oliver Goldsmith to his Brother, Henry*

1759.

Imagine to yourself a pale, melancholy visage, with two great wrinkles between the eyebrows, with an eye disgustingly severe, and a big wig ; and you may have a perfect picture of my present appearance. On the other hand, I conceive you as perfectly sleek and healthy, passing many a happy day among your own children, or those who knew you a child.

Since I knew what it was to be a man, this is a pleasure I have not known. I have passed my days among a parcel of cool, designing beings, and have contracted all their suspicious manner in my own behaviour. I should actually be as unfit for the society of my friends at home, as I detest that which I am obliged to partake of here. I can now neither partake

of the pleasure of a revel, nor contribute to raise its jollity. I can neither laugh nor drink ; have contracted a hesitating, disagreeable manner of speaking, and a visage that looks ill-nature itself ; in short, I have thought myself into a settled melancholy, and an utter disgust of all that life brings with it. Whence this romantic turn that all our family are possessed with ? Whence this love for every place and every country but that in which we reside—for every occupation but our own ? this desire of fortune, and yet this eagerness to dissipate ? I perceive, my dear sir, that I am at intervals for indulging this splenetic manner, and following my own taste, regardless of yours.

The reasons you have given me for breeding up your son a scholar are judicious and convincing ; I should, however, be glad to know for what particular profession he is designed. If he be assiduous and divested of strong passions (for passions in youth always lead to pleasure), he may do very well in your college ; for it must be owned that the industrious poor have good encouragement there, perhaps better than in any other in Europe. But if he has ambition, strong passions, and an exquisite sensibility of contempt, do not send him there, unless you have no other trade for him but your own. It is impossible to conceive how much may be done by proper education at home. A boy, for instance, who understands perfectly well Latin, French, arithmetic, and the principles of the civil law, and can write a fine hand, has an education that may qualify him for any undertaking ; and these parts of learning should be carefully inculcated, let him be designed for whatever calling he will.

Above all things, let him never touch a romance or novel ; these paint beauty in colours more charming

than nature, and describe happiness that man never tastes. How delusive, how destructive are those pictures of consummate bliss ! They teach the youthful mind to sigh after beauty and happiness that never existed ; to despise the little good which fortune has mixed in our cup, by expecting more than she ever gave ; and, in general, take the word of a man who has seen the world and who has studied human nature more by experience than precept ; take my word for it, I say, that books teach us very little of the world. The greatest merit in a state of poverty would only serve to make the possessor ridiculous—may distress, but cannot relieve him. Frugality, and even avarice, in the lower orders of mankind, are true ambition. These afford the only ladder for the poor to rise to preferment. Teach then, my dear sir, to your son, thrift and economy. Let his poor wandering Uncle's example be placed before his eyes. I had learned from books to be disinterested and generous, before I was taught from experience the necessity of being prudent. I had contracted the habits and notions of a philosopher, while I was exposing myself to the approaches of insidious cunning ; and often by being, even with my narrow finances, charitable to excess, I forgot the rules of justice, and placed myself in the very situation of the wretch who thanked me for my bounty. When I am in the remotest part of the world, tell him this, and perhaps he may improve from my example. But I find myself again falling into my gloomy habits of thinking.

My mother, I am informed, is almost blind ; even though I had the utmost inclination to return home, under such circumstances I could not, for to behold her in distress without a capacity of relieving her from it, would add much to my splenetic habit. Your last letter was much too short ; it should have answered

some queries I had made in my former. Just sit down as I do, and write forward until you have filled all your paper. It requires no thought, at least from the ease with which my own sentiments rise when they are addressed to you. For, believe me, my head has no share in all I write ; my heart dictates the whole. Pray give my love to Bob Bryanton, and entreat him from me not to drink. My dear sir, give me some account about poor Jenny.<sup>1</sup> Yet her husband loves her : if so, she cannot be unhappy.

I know not whether I should tell you—yet why should I conceal these trifles, or, indeed anything from you ? There is a book of mine will be published in a few days : the life of a very extraordinary man ; no less than the great Voltaire. You know already by the title that it is no more than a catch-penny. However, I spent but four weeks on the whole performance, for which I received twenty pounds. When published, I shall take some method of conveying it to you, unless you may think it dear of the postage, which may amount to four or five shillings. However, I fear you will not find an equivalent of amusement.

Your last letter, I repeat, was too short ; you should have given me your opinion of the design of the herocomical poem which I sent you. You remember I intended to introduce the hero of the poem as lying in a paltry alehouse. You may take the following specimen of the manner, which I flatter myself is quite original. The room in which he lies may be described somewhat in this way ;

“ The window, patched with paper, lent a ray  
That feebly show’d the state in which he lay ;

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<sup>1</sup> His sister, Mrs. Johnson.

The sanded floor that grits beneath the tread,  
The humid wall with paltry pictures spread ;  
The game of goose was there exposed to view,  
And the twelve rules the royal martyr drew ;  
The Seasons, framed with listing, found a place,  
And Prussia's monarch show'd his lamp-black face.  
The morn was cold : he views with keen desire  
A rusty grate unconscious of a fire ;  
An unpaid reckoning on the frieze was scored,  
And five crack'd teacups dress'd the chimney board."

And now imagine after his soliloquy, the landlord to make his appearance in order to dun him for the reckoning :

" Not with that face, so servile and so gay,  
That welcomes every stranger that can pay :  
With sulky eye he smoked the patient man,  
Then pull'd his breeches tight, and thus began." <sup>1</sup>

All this is taken, you see, from nature. It is a good remark of Montaigne's, that the wisest men often have friends with whom they do not care how much they play the fool. Take my present follies as instances of my regard. Poetry is a much easier and more agreeable species of composition than prose ; and, could a man live by it, it were not unpleasant employment to be a poet. I am resolved to leave no space, though I should fill it up only by telling you, what you very well know already, I mean that I am your most affectionate friend and brother,

OLIVER GOLDSMITH.

<sup>1</sup> The projected form, of which the above were specimens, appears never to have been completed. Goldsmith, however, made use of it, in an improved form in paper No. 30, in *The Citizen of the World*, entitled *A Club of Authors*, wherein the poet insists upon reading his creation to the assembled members and, as a penalty, is compelled to lay down sixpence before opening his manuscript, and to pay a fine of a shilling for every hour during which he continues to read, "the said shilling to be equally distributed among the company as a recompense for their trouble."

RECIPE FOR CURING THE WANDER-LUST<sup>1</sup>*Charles Lamb to Mr. Manning**Feb. 19th, 1803.*

MY DEAR MANNING,—The general scope of your letter afforded no indications of insanity, but some particular points raised a scruple. For God's sake don't think any more of "Independent Tartary."<sup>1</sup> What are you to do among such Ethiopians? Is there no *lineal descendant* of Prester John? Is the chair empty? Is the sword unswayed?—depend upon it they'll never make you their king, as long as any branch of that great stock is remaining. I tremble for your Christianity. They will certainly circumcise you. Read Sir John Mandeville's travels to cure you, or come over to England. There is a Tartar-man now exhibiting at Exeter 'Change. Come and talk with him, and hear what he says first. Indeed, he is no very favourable specimen of his countrymen! But perhaps the best thing you can do, is to *try* to get the idea out of your head. For this purpose repeat to yourself every night, after you have said your prayers, the words, Independent Tartary, Independent Tartary, two or three times, and associate with them the idea of *oblivion* ('tis Hartley's method with obstinate memories), or say, Independent, Independent, have I not already got an *independence*? That was a clever way of the old puritans, pun-divinity. My dear friend, think what a sad pity it would be to bury such *parts* in heathen countries, among nasty, unanswerable, horse-belching, Tartar-people! Some say, they are Cannibals; and then, conceive a Tartar-fellow *eating* my friend, and adding the *cool malignity* of mustard and vinegar! I am afraid

<sup>1</sup> In the spring of 1806, Manning sailed for China, and did not return to England until 1817.

'tis the reading of Chaucer has misled you ; his foolish stories about Cambuscan, and the ring, and the horse of brass. Believe me, there are no such things, 'tis all the poet's *invention* ; but if there were such darling things as old Chaucer sings, I would *up* behind you on the horse of brass, and *frisk* off for Prester John's country. But these are all tales ; a horse of brass never flew, and a king's daughter never talked with birds ! The Tartars, really, are a cold, insipid, smouchy set. You'll be sadly moped (if you are not eaten) among them. Pray *try* and cure yourself. Take hellebore (the counsel is Horace's, 'twas none of my thought *originally*). Shave yourself oftener. Eat no saffron, for saffron eaters contract a terrible Tartar-like yellow. Pray, to avoid the fiend. Eat nothing that gives the heart-burn. *Shave the upper lip.* Go about like an European. Read no books of voyages (they are nothing but lies), only now and then a romance, to keep the fancy *under*. Above all, don't go to any sights of *wild beasts*. *That has been your ruin.* Accustom yourself to write familiar letters, on common subjects, to your friends in England, such as are of a moderate understanding. And think about common things more. I supped last night with Rickman, and met a merry *natural* captain, who pleases himself vastly with once having made a pun at Otaheite in the O. language.<sup>1</sup> 'Tis the same man who said Shakspere he liked, because he was so *much of the gentleman*. Rickman is a man "absolute in all numbers." I think I may one day bring you acquainted, if you do not go to Tartary first ; for you'll never come back. Have a care, my dear friend, of Anthropophagi ! their stomachs are always craving. 'Tis terrible to be weighed out at fivepence a-pound. To sit a\*

<sup>1</sup> Captain, afterwards Admiral Burney.

table (the reverse of fishes in Holland), not as a guest, but as a meat.

God bless you; do' come to England. Air and exercise may do great things. Talk with some minister. Why not your father?

God dispose all for the best. I have discharged my duty.

Your sincere friend,  
C. LAMB.

“ THIS IS CHRISTMAS DAY WITH US ”

*Charles Lamb to Mr. Manning*

*Dec. 25th, 1815.*

DEAR OLD FRIEND AND ABSENTEE,—This is Christmas Day 1815 with us; what it may be with you I don't know, the 12th of June next year perhaps; and if it should be the consecrated season with you, I don't see how you can keep it. You have no turkeys; you would not desecrate the festival by offering up a withered Chinese bantam, instead of the savoury grand Norfolcian holocaust, that smokes all around my nostrils at this moment, from a thousand firesides. Then what puddings have you. Where will you get holly to stick in your churches, or churches to stick your dried tea-leaves (that must be the substitute) in? What memorials you can have of the holy time, I see not. A chopped missionary or two may keep up the thin idea of Lent and the Wilderness; but what standing evidence have you of the Nativity?—'tis our rosy-cheeked, homestalled divines, whose faces shine to the tune of unto us a child was born; faces fragrant with mince-pies of half a century, that alone can authenticate the cheerful mystery—I feel, I feel my bowels refreshed with the holy tide—my zeal is great against the un-

edified heathen. Down with the Pagodas—down with the idols—Ching-chong-fo—and his foolish priesthood! Come out of Babylon, O my friend! for her time is come, and the child that is native, and the Proselyte of her gates, shall kindle and smoke together! And in sober sense, what makes you so long from among us, Manning? You must not expect to see the same England again which you left.

Empires have been overturned, crowns trodden into dust, the face of the western world quite changed: your friends have all got old—those you left blooming—myself (who am one of the few that remember you) those golden hairs which you recollect my taking a pride in, turned to silvery and grey. Mary has been dead and buried many years—she desired to be buried in the silk gown you sent her. Rickman, that you remember active and strong, now walks out supported by a servant-maid and a stick. Martin Burney is a very old man. The other day an aged woman knocked at my door, and pretended to my acquaintance; it was long before I had the most distant cognition of her; but at last together we made her out to be Louisa, the daughter of Mrs. Topham, formerly Mrs. Morton, who had been Mrs. Reynolds, formerly Mrs. Kenny, whose first husband was Holcroft, the dramatic writer of the last century. St. Paul's church is a heap of ruins; the Monument isn't half so high as you knew it, divers parts being successively taken down which the ravages of time had rendered dangerous; the horse at Charing Cross is gone, no one knows whither—and all this has taken place while you have been settling whether Hohing-tong should be spelt with a —, or a —. F aught I see you had almost as well remain where are, and not come like a Struldbrug into a world few were born when you went away. So

and there one will be able to make out your face ; all your opinions will be out of date, your jokes obsolete, your puns rejected with fastidiousness as wit of the last age. Your way of mathematics has already given way to a new method, which after all is I believe the old doctrine of Maclaurin, new-vamped up with what he borrowed of the negative quantity of fluxions from Euler.

“ Poor Godwin ! I was passing his tomb the other day in Cripplegate churchyard. There are some verses upon it written by Miss ——, which if I thought good enough I would send you. He was one of those who would have hailed your return, not with boisterous shouts and clamours, but with the complacent gratulations of a philosopher anxious to promote knowledge as leading to happiness—but his systems and his theories are ten feet deep in Cripplegate mould. Coleridge is just dead, having lived just long enough to close the eyes of Wordsworth, who paid the debt to nature but a week or two before—poor Col., but two days before he died, he wrote to a bookseller proposing an epic poem on the ‘Wanderings of Cain,’ in twenty-four books. It is said he has left behind him more than forty thousand treatises in criticism, metaphysics, and divinity, but few of them in a state of completion. They are now destined, perhaps, to wrap up spices. You see what mutations the busy hand of Time has produced, while you have consumed in foolish voluntary exile that time which might have gladdened your friends—benefited your country ; but reproaches are useless. Gather up the wretched reliques, my friend, as fast as you can, and come to your old home. I will my eyes and try to recognize you. We will shake hands together, and talk of old things—of ‘s church and the barber’s opposite, where

the young students in mathematics used to assemble. Poor Crisp, that kept it afterwards, set up a fruiterer's shop in Trumpington Street, and for aught I know, resides there still, for I saw the name up in the last journey I took there with my sister just before she died. I suppose you heard that I had left the India House, and gone into the Fishmongers' Almshouses over the bridge. I have a little cabin there, small and homely; but you shall be welcome to it. You like oysters, and to open them yourself; I'll get you some if you come in oyster time. Marshall, Godwin's old friend, is still alive, and talks of the faces you used to make. Come as soon as you can.

C. LAMB.

'TIS SUCH A FORLORN HOPE TO SEND A SCRAP OF  
PAPER STRAGGLING OVER WIDE OCEANS.

*Charles Lamb to Mr. Manning.*

*Dec. 26, 1815.*

DEAR MANNING,—Following your brother's example, I have just ventured one letter to Canton, and am now hazarding another (not exactly a duplicate) to St. Helena. The first was full of improbable romantic fictions, fitting the remoteness of the mission it goes upon; in the present I mean to confine myself nearer to truth as you come nearer home. A correspondence with the uttermost parts of the earth necessarily involves in it some heat of fancy, it sets the brain a-going, but I can think on the half-way house tranquilly. Your friends then are not all dead or grown forgetful of you through old age, as that lying letter asserted, anticipating rather what must happen if you kept tarrying on for ever on the skirts of creation, as

there seemed a danger of your doing—but they are all tolerably well and in full and perfect comprehension of what is meant by Manning's coming home again. Mrs. —— never lets her tongue run riot more than in remembrances of you. Fanny expends herself in phrases that can only be justified by her romantic nature. Mary reserves a portion of your silk, not to be buried in (as the false nuncio asserts) but to make up spick and span into a brand new gown to wear when you come. I am the same as when you knew me, almost to a surfeiting identity. This very night I am going to *leave off tobacco* !<sup>1</sup> Surely there must be some other world in which this unconquerable purpose shall be realized. The soul hath not her generous aspirations implanted in her in vain. One that you knew, and I think the only one of those friends we knew much in common, has died in earnest. Poor Priscilla ! Her brother Robert is also dead, and several of the grown up brothers and sisters, in the compass of a very few years. Death has not otherwise meddled much in families that I know. Not but he has his horrid eye upon us, and is whetting his infernal feathered dart every instant, as you see him truly pictured in that impressive moral picture, “ The good man at the hour

<sup>1</sup> All through his life Lamb was making good resolutions to abstain from the use of tobacco. So early as 1805, in sending to Mr. and Miss Wordsworth a copy of his poem, “ Farewell to Tobacco,” he writes, “ I ..ish you may think this a handsome farewell to my ‘ Friendly Traitors.’ Tobacco has been my evening comfort and my ‘ morning curse for these five years ; and you know how difficult it is from restraining to pick one’s lips even, when it has become a habit. This poem is the only one which I have finished since so long ago as when I wrote ‘ Hester Savory.’ I have had it in my head to do it these two years, but tobacco stood in its own light when it gave me headaches that prevented my singing its praises.”

of death.' I have in trust to put in the post four letters from Diss, and one from Lynn, to St. Helena, which I hope will accompany this safe, and one from Lynn, and the one before spoken of from me, to Canton. But we all hope that these letters may be waste paper. I don't know why I have forborne writing so long. But it is such a forlorn hope to send a scrap of paper straggling over wide oceans. And yet I know when you come home I shall have you sitting before me at our fireside just as if you had never been away. In such an instant does the return of a person dissipate all the weight of imaginary perplexity from distance of time and space ! I'll promise you good oysters. Cory is dead that kept the shop opposite St. Dunstan's, but the tougher materials of the shop survive the perishing fame of its keeper. Oysters continue to flourish there under as good auspices. Poor Cory ! But if you will absent yourself twenty years together, you must not expect numerically the same population to congratulate your return which wetted the sea-beach with their tears when you went away. Have you recovered the breathless stone-staring astonishment into which you must have been thrown upon learning at landing that an Emperor of France was living in St. Helena ? What an event in the solitude of the seas ! like finding a fish's bone at the top of Plinlimmon ; but these things are nothing in our western world. Novelties cease to affect. Come and try what your presence can.

" God bless you.—Your old friend,

" C. LAMB."

## BOSWELLIANA

*Lord Macaulay to Hannah and Margaret Macaulay*

London: June 7, 1831.

Yesterday I dined at Marshall's and was almost consoled for not meeting Ramohun Roy by a very pleasant party. The great sight was the two wits, Rogers and Sydney Smith. Singly I have often seen them; but to see them both together was a novelty, and a novelty not the less curious because their mutual hostility is well known, and the hard hits which they have given to each other are in everybody's mouth. They were very civil, however. But I was struck by the truth of what Matthew Bramble, a person of whom you probably never heard, says in Smollett's Humphrey Clinker: that one wit in a company, like a knuckle of ham in soup, gives a flavour: but two are too many. Rogers and Sydney Smith would not come into conflict. If one had possession of the company, the other was silent; and, as you may conceive, the one who had possession of the company was always Sydney Smith, and the one who was silent was always Rogers. Sometimes, however, the company divided, and each of them had a small congregation. I had a good deal of talk with both of them; for, in whatever they may disagree, they agree in always treating me with very marked kindness.

I had a good deal of pleasant conversation with Rogers. He was telling me of the curiosity and interest which attached to the persons of Sir Walter Scott and Lord Byron. When Sir Walter Scott dined at a gentleman's in London some time ago, all the servant-maids in the house asked leave to stand in the passage and see him pass. He was, as you may conceive, greatly flattered. About Lord Byron, whom he knew

well, he told me some curious anecdotes. When Lord Byron passed through Florence, Rogers was there. They had a good deal of conversation, and Rogers accompanied him to his carriage. The inn had fifty windows in front. All the windows were crowded with women, mostly English women, to catch a glance at their favourite poet. Among them were some at whose house he had often been in England, and with whom he had lived on friendly terms. He would not notice them, or return their salutations. Rogers was the only person that he spoke to.

The worst thing that I know about Lord Byron is the very unfavourable impression which he made on men, who certainly were not inclined to judge him harshly, and who, as far as I know, were never personally ill-used by him. Sharp and Rogers both speak of him as an unpleasant, affected, splenetic person. I have heard hundreds and thousands of people who never saw him rant about him: but I never heard a single expression of fondness for him fall from the lips of any of those who knew him well. Yet, even now, after the lapse of five-and-twenty years, there are those who cannot talk for a quarter of an hour about Charles Fox without tears.

Sydney Smith leaves London on the 20th, the day before Parliament meets for business. I advised him and see something of his friends who would go to London. "My flock!" said this good man. "Dear Sir, remember my flock! The sheep look up and are not fed."

I was not to such an argument; but I could not help laughing, if Mr. Daniel Wilson had said that he had infallibly have appeared in his Life by Baptist Noel. But

in poor Sydney's mouth it sounded like a joke. He begged me to come and see him at Combe Florey. "There I am, Sir, the priest of the Flowery Valley, in a delightful parsonage, about which I care a good deal, and a delightful country, about which I do not care a straw." I told him that my meeting him was some compensation for missing Ramohun Roy. Sydney broke forth: "Compensation! Do you mean to insult me? A beneficed clergyman, an orthodox clergyman, a nobleman's chaplain, to be no more than compensation for a Brahmin; and a heretic Brahmin too, a fellow who has lost his own religion and can't find another; a vile heterodox dog, who, as I am credibly informed eats beef-steaks in private! A man who has lost his caste! who ought to have melted lead poured down his nostrils, if the good old Vedas were in force as they ought to be."

These are some Boswelliana of Sydney; not very clerical, you will say, but indescribably amusing to the hearers, whatever the readers may think of them. Nothing can present a more striking contrast to his rapid, loud, laughing utterance, and his rector-like amplitude and rubicundity, than the low, slow, emphatic tone, and the corpse-like face of Rogers. There is as great a difference in what they say as in the voice and look with which they say it. The conversing Rogers is remarkably polished and artificial; he says seems to have been long meditated, and published with little correction. the impulse of the moment, and his haustible.

RAJAHS, CRANKS, VIRGIL, LITERARY GOOD ADVICE,  
AND AN ENTIRELY NEW METHOD OF PREVENTING  
MEN FROM SWEARING FALSELY

*Lord Macaulay to Thomas Flower Ellis*

Ootacamund : *July 1, 1834.*

DEAR ELLIS.—You need not get your map to see where Ootacamund is : for it has not found its way into the maps. It is a new discovery ; a place to which Europeans resort for their health, or, as it is called by the Company's servants,—blessings on their learning,—a *sanaterion*. It lies at the height of 7,000 feet above the sea.

While London is a perfect gridiron, here am I, at  $13^{\circ}$  North from the equator, by a blazing wood fire, with my windows closed. My bed is heaped with blankets, and my black servants are coughing round me in all directions. One poor fellow in particular looks so miserably cold that, unless the sun comes out, I am likely soon to see under my roof the spectacle which according to Shakespeare, is so interesting to the English,—a dead Indian.<sup>1</sup>

I travelled the whole four hundred miles between this and Madras on men's shoulders. I had an agreeable journey on the whole. I was honoured by an interview with the Rajah of Mysore, who insisted on showing me all his wardrobe, and his picture gallery. He has six or seven coloured English prints not much inferior to those which I have seen in the sanded parlour of a country inn ; “Going to Cover,” “The Death of the Fox,” and so forth. But the bijou of this gallery, of which he is as vain as the Grand Duke can be of Venus, or Lord Carlisle of the

<sup>1</sup> *The Tempest*, act ii., scene 2.

Three Maries, is a head of the Duke of Wellington, which has, most certainly, been a sign-post in England.

Yet, after all, the Rajah was by no means the greatest fool whom I found at Mysore. I alighted at a bungalow appertaining to the British Residency. There I found an Englishman who, without any preface, accosted me thus : “ Pray, Mr. Macaulay, do not you think that Buonaparte was the Beast ? ”

“ No, sir, I cannot say that I do.” “ Sir, he was the Beast. I can prove it. I have found the number 666 in his name. Why, Sir, if he was not the Beast, who was ? ” This was a puzzling question, and I am not a little vain of my answer. “ Sir,” said I, “ the House of Commons is the Beast. There are 658 members of the House ; and these, with their chief officers,—the three clerks, the Sergeant and his deputy, the Chaplain, the door-keeper, and the librarian,—make 666.” “ Well, Sir, that is strange. But I can assure you that, if you write Napoleon Buonaparte in Arabic, leaving out only two letters, it will give you 666.”

“ And pray, Sir, what right have you to leave out two letters ? And, as St. John was writing Greek, and to Greeks, is it not likely that he would use the Greek rather than the Arabic notation ? ” “ But, Sir,” said this learned divine, “ everybody knows that the Greek letters were never used to mark numbers,” I answered with the meekest look and voice possible : “ I do not think that everybody knows that. Indeed I have reason to believe that a different opinion,—erroneous no doubt,—is universally embraced by all the small minority who happen to know any Greek.” So ended the controversy. The man looked at me as if he thought me a very wicked fellow ; and, I dare say, has by this time discovered that, if you write my name in Tamul, leaving out T

in Thomas, B in Babington, and M in Macaulay, it will give the number of this unfortunate Beast.

I am very comfortable here. The Governor-General is the frankest and best-natured of men. The chief functionaries, who have attended him hither, are clever people, but not exactly on a par as to general attainments with the society to which I belonged in London. I thought, however, even at Madras, that I could have formed a very agreeable circle of acquaintance ; and I am assured that at Calcutta I shall find things far better. After all, the best rule in all parts of the world, as in London itself, is to be independent of other men's minds. My power of finding amusement without companions was pretty well tried on my voyage. I read insatiably ; the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, *Virgil*, *Horace*, *Cæsar's Commentaries*, *Bacon de Augmentis*, *Dante*, *Petrarch*, *Ariosto*, *Tasso*, *Don Quixote*, *Gibbon's Rome*, *Mill's India*, all of the seventy volumes of *Voltaire*, *Sismondi's History of France*, and the seven thick folios of the *Biographia Britannica*. I found my Greek and Latin in good condition enough. I liked the *Iliad* a little less, and *Odyssey* a great deal more than formerly. *Horace* charmed me more than ever ; *Virgil* not quite so much as he used to do. The want of human character, the poverty of his supernatural machinery, struck me very strongly. Can anything be so bad as the living bush which bleeds and talks, or the Harpies who befoul *Aeneas's dinner* ? It is as extravagant as *Ariosto*, and as dull as *Wilkie's Epigoniad*. The last six books, which *Virgil* had not fully corrected, pleased me better than the first six. I like him best on Italian ground. I like his localities ; his national enthusiasm ; his frequent allusions to his country, its history, its antiquities,

and its greatness. In this respect he often reminded me of Sir Walter Scott, with whom, in the general character of his mind, he had very little affinity. The Georgics pleased me better ; the Eclogues best,—the second and tenth above all. But I think the finest lines in the Latin language are those five which begin,

“ *Sepibus in nostris parvam te roscida mala—*” <sup>1</sup>

I cannot tell you how they struck me. I was amused to find that Voltaire pronounces that passage to be the finest in Virgil.

I liked the Jerusalem better than I used to do. I was enraptured with Ariosto ; and I still think of Dante, as I thought when I first read him, that he is a superior poet to Milton, that he runs neck and neck with Homer, and that none but Shakespeare has gone decidedly beyond him.

As soon as I reach Calcutta I intend to read Herodotus again. By the bye, why do not you translate him ? You would do it excellently ; and a translation of Herodotus, well executed, would rank with original compositions. A quarter of an hour a day would finish the work in five years. The notes might be made the most amusing in the world. I wish you would think of it. At all events, I hope you will do something which may interest more than seven or eight people. Your talents are too great, and your leisure time too small, to be wasted in inquiries so frivolous, (I must call them,) as those in which you have of late been too much engaged ; whether the Cherokees are of the same race with the Chickasaws ; whether Van Dieman’s Land was peopled from New,

Holland, or New Holland from Van Dieman's Land ; what is the precise mode of appointing a headman in a village in Timbuctoo. I would not give the worst page in Clarendon or Fra Paolo for all that ever was, or ever will be, written about the migrations of the Leleges and the laws of the Oscans.

I have already entered upon my public functions, and I hope to do some good. The very wigs of the Judges in the Court of King's Bench would stand on end if they knew how short a chapter my Law of Evidence will form. I am not without many advisers. A native of some fortune in Madras has sent me a paper on legislation. "Your honour must know," says this judicious person, "that the great evil is that men swear falsely in this country. No judge knows what to believe. Surely if your honour can make men to swear truly, your honour's fame will be great, and the Company will flourish. Now, I know how men may be made to swear truly; and I will tell your honour for your fame, and for the profit of the Company. Let your honour cut off the great toe of the right foot of every man who swears falsely, whereby your honour's fame will be extended." Is not this an exquisite specimen of legislative wisdom ?

I must stop. When I begin to write to England, my pen runs as if it would run on for ever.

Ever yours affectionately

T. B. M.

## FROM A DISTANT LAND

*Mary Taylor<sup>1</sup> to Charlotte Brontë*

## I.

Wellington, New Zealand,

July 24th, 1849.

DEAR CHARLOTTE,—About a month since I received and read *Jane Eyre*. It seemed to me incredible that you had actually written a book. Such events did not happen while I was in England. I begin to believe in your existence much as I do in Mr. Rochester's. In a believing mood I don't doubt either of them. After I had read it I went on to the top of Mount Victoria and looked for a ship to carry a letter to you. There was a little thing with one mast, and also H.M.S. *Fly*, and nothing else. If a cattle vessel came from Sydney she would probably return in a few days, and would take a mail, but we have had east winds for a month and nothing can come in.

Aug. 1.—The *Harlequin* has just come from Otago, and is to sail for Singapore *when the wind changes*,

<sup>1</sup> Charlotte Brontë's three most intimate girl friends were Ellen Nussey, Mary Taylor, and Lætitia Wheelwright; of these Mary Taylor was the second best—she is the “Rose Yorke” of *Shirley*. Charlotte Brontë, Ellen Nussey, and Mary Taylor first met at Roe Head School, when Charlotte and Mary were fifteen years of age. Mary Taylor, whose pet-name was “Pag,” went on a long visit to Brussels; her example led the way for Charlotte and Emily Brontë to establish themselves at the Pensionnat Héger—the storm centre of *Villette*. Later she went to New Zealand, that she might earn her own living there. About 1859, or 1860, she returned to England, and lived in seclusion upon the Yorkshire moors. In 1890, when quite an old lady, she published her first and only novel—*Miss Miles*,—the purpose of which is to teach that women ought to make themselves independent of the other sex. At High Royd, Yorkshire, March, 1893, she died at the age of seventy-six.

and by that route (which I hope to take myself sometime) I send you this. Much good may it do you. Your novel surprised me by being so perfect as a work of art. I expected something more changeable and unfinished. You have polished to some purpose. If I were to do so I should get tired, and weary every one else in about two pages. No sign of this weariness in your book—you must have had abundance, having kept it all to yourself!

You are very different from me in having no doctrine to preach. It is impossible to squeeze a moral out of your production. Has the world gone so well with you that you have no protest to make against its absurdities? Did you never sneer or declaim in your first sketches? I will scold you well when I see you. I do not believe in Mr. Rivers. There are no *good* men of the Brocklehurst species. A missionary either goes into his office for a piece of bread, or he goes from enthusiasm, and that is both too good and too bad a quality for St. John. It's a bit of your absurd charity to believe in such a man. You have done wisely in choosing to imagine a high class of readers. You never stop to explain or defend anything, and never seem bothered with the idea. If Mrs. Fairfax or any other well-intentioned fool gets hold of this what will she think? And yet, you know, the world is made up of such, and worse. Once more, how have you written through three volumes without declaring war to the knife against a few dozen absurd doctrines, each of which is supported by "a larg^ and respectable class of readers"? Emily seems to have had such a class in her eye when she wrote that strange thing *Wuthering Heights*. Anne, too, stops repeatedly to preach commonplace truths. She has had a still lower class in her mind's eye.

Emily seems to have followed the bookseller's advice. As to the price you got, it was certainly Jewish. But what could the people do? If they had asked you to fix it, do you know yourself how many ciphers your sum would have had? And how should they know better? And if they did, that's the knowledge they get their living by. If I were in your place, the idea of being bound in the sale of two more would prevent me from ever writing again. Yet you are probably now busy with another. It is curious for me to see among the old letters one from Anne sending a *copy of a whole article* on the currency question written by Fonblanque! I exceedingly regret having burnt your letters in a fit of caution, and I've forgotten all the names. Was the reader Albert Smith? What do they all think of you?

I mention the book to no one and hear no opinions. I lend it a good deal because it's a novel, and *it's as good as another!* They say "it makes them cry." They are not literary enough to give an opinion. If ever I hear one I'll embalm it for you. As to my own affair, I have written 100 pages, and lately 50 more. It's no use writing faster. I get so disgusted I can do nothing.

If I could command sufficient money for a twelve-month, I would go home by way of India and write my travels, which would prepare the way for my novel. With the benefit of your *experience* I should perhaps make a better bargain than you. I am most afraid of my health. Not that I should die, but perhaps sink into a state of betweenity, neither well nor ill, in which I should observe nothing, and be very miserable besides. My life here is not disagreeable. I have a great resource in the piano, and a little employment in teaching.

It's a pity you don't live in this world, that I might entertain you about the price of meat. Do you know, I bought six heifers the other day for £23, and now it is turned so cold I expect to hear one-half of them are dead. One man bought twenty sheep for £8, and they are all dead but one. Another bought 150 and has 40 left.

I have now told you everything I can think of except that the cat's on the table and that I'm going to borrow a new book to read—no less than an account of all the systems of philosophy of modern Europe. I have lately met with a wonder, a man who thinks Jane Eyre would have done better to marry Mr. Rivers! He gives no reason—such people never do.

MARY TAYLOR.

## II

Wellington, New Zealand.

DEAR CHARLOTTE,—I have set up shop; I am delighted with it as a whole—that is, it is as pleasant or as little disagreeable as you can expect an employment to be that you earn your living by. The best of it is that your labour has some return, and you are not forced to work on hopelessly without result. *Du reste*, it is very odd. I keep looking at myself with one eye while I'm using the other, and I sometimes find myself in very queer positions. Yesterday I went along the shore past the wharves and several warehouses on a street where I had never been before during all the five years I have been in Wellington. I opened the door of a long place filled with packages, with passages up the middle, and a row of high windows on one side. At the far end of the room a man was writing at a desk beneath a

window. I walked all the length of the room very slowly, for what I had come for had completely gone out of my head. Fortunately the man never heard me until I had recollected it. Then he got up, and I asked him for some stone-blue, saltptcre, tea, pickles, salt, etc. He was very civil. I bought some things and asked for a note of them. He went to his desk again ; I looked at some newspapers lying near. On the top was a circular from Smith & Elder, containing notices of the most important new works. The first and longest was given to *Shirley*, a book I had seen mentioned in the *Manchester Examiner* as written by Currer Bell.<sup>1</sup> I blushed all over. The man got up, folding the note. I pulled it out of his hand and set off to the door, looking odder than ever, for a partner had come in and was watching. The clerk said something about sending them, and I said something too—I hope it was not very silly—and took my departure.

I have seen some extracts from *Shirley* in which you talk of women working. And this first duty, this great necessity, you seem to think that some women may indulge in, if they give up marriage, and don't make themselves too disagreeable to the other sex. You are a coward and a traitor. A woman who works is by that alone better than one who does not ; and a woman who does not happen to be rich and who *still* earns no money and does not wish to do so, is guilty of a great fault, almost a crime—a dereliction of duty which leads rapidly and almost certainly to all manner of degradation. It is very wrong of you to *plead* for toleration for workers on the ground of their being in peculiar circumstances, and few in number or singular in disposition. Work or degradation

<sup>1</sup> Charlotte Brontë's *nom de plume*.

is the lot of all except the very small number born to wealth.

### III

Wellington, N. Z., *April 3rd, 1850.*

DEAR CHARLOTTE,—About a week since I received your last melancholy letter with the account of Anne's death<sup>1</sup> and your utter indifference to everything, even to the success of your last book. Though you do not say this, it is pretty plain to be seen from the style of your letter. It seems to me hard indeed that you who would succeed, better than any one, in making friends and keeping them, should be condemned to solitude from your poverty. To no one would money bring more happiness, for no one would use it better than you would. For me, with my headlong self-indulgent habits, I am perhaps better without it, but I am convinced it would give you great and noble pleasures. Look out then for success in writing; you ought to care as much for that as you do for going to Heaven. Though the advantages of being employed appear to you now the best part of the business, you will soon, please God, have other enjoyments from your success. Railway shares will rise, your books will sell, and you will acquire influence and power; and then most certainly you will find something to use it in which will interest you and make you exert yourself.

### IV

Wellington, N. Z.

DEAR CHARLOTTE,—I began a letter to you one bitter cold evening last week, but it turned out such

<sup>1</sup> Anne Brontë.

a sad one that I have left it and begun again. I am sitting all alone in my own house, or rather what is to be mine when I've paid for it. I bought it of Henry when Ellen<sup>1</sup> died—shop and all, and carry it on by myself. I have made up my mind not to get any assistance. I have not too much work, and the annoyance of having an unsuitable companion was too great to put up with without necessity. I find now that it was Ellen that made me so busy, and without her to nurse I have plenty of time. I have begun to keep the house very tidy ; it makes it less desolate. I take great interest in my trade—as much as I could do in anything that was not *all* pleasure. But the best part of my life is the excitement of arrivals from England. Reading all the news, written and printed, is like living another life quite separate from this one. The old letters are strange—very, when I begin to read them, but quite familiar notwithstanding. So are all the books and newspapers, though I never see a human being to whom it would ever occur to me to mention anything I read in them. I see your *nom de guerre* in them sometimes. I saw a criticism on the preface to the second edition of *Wuthering Heights*. I saw it among the notables who attended Thackeray's lectures. I have seen it somehow connected with Sir J. K. Shuttleworth. Did he want to marry you, or only to lionise you ? or was it somebody else ?

Your life in London is a “ new country ” to me, which I cannot even picture to myself. You seem to like it—at least some things in it, and yet your late letters to Mrs. J. Taylor talk of low spirits and illness. “ What's the matter with you now ? ” as my mother used to say, as if it were the twentieth time in a

<sup>1</sup> Ellen Taylor, cousin to Mary Taylor, who had joined her in the enterprise of keeping shop and had recently died.

fortnight. It is really melancholy that now, in the prime of life, in the flush of your hard-earned prosperity, you can't be well. Did not Mrs. Martineau improve you? If she did, why not try her and her plan again? But I suppose if you had hope and energy 'o try, you would be well. Well, it's nearly dark and you will surely be well when you read this, so what's the use of writing? I should like well to have some details of your life, but how can I hope for it? I have often tried to give you a picture of mine, but I have not the skill. I get a heap of details, mostly paltry in themselves, and not enough to give you an idea of the whole. Oh, for one hour's talk! You are getting too far off and beginning to look strange to me. Do you look as you used to do, I wonder? What do you and Ellen Nussey talk about when you meet? There! it's dark.

INVITATION TO JOIN IN THE FOUNDING OF THE MISANTHROPIC SOCIETY

*Thomas Carlyle<sup>1</sup> to Thomas de Quincey*

Craigenputtoch, 11th December, 1828.

MY DEAR SIR,

Having the opportunity of a frank, I cannot resist the temptation to send you a few lines, were it only to signify that two well-wishers of yours are still alive in these remote moors, and often thinking of you with the old friendly feelings. My wife encourages me in this innocent purpose: she has learned lately

<sup>1</sup> James Smetham, in one of his letters, speaks finely of Carlyle as "The great Gothic whale lumbering and floundering in the Northern Seas, and spouting his 'foam fountains' under the crackling Aurora and the piercing Hyperborean stars."

that you were inquiring for her of some female friend ; nay, even promising to visit us here—a fact of the most interesting sort to both of us. I am to say, therefore, that your presence at this fireside will diffuse no ordinary gladness over all members of the household ; that our warmest welcome, and such solacements, as even the desert does not refuse, are at any time, and at all times in store for one we love so well. Neither is this expedition so impracticable. We lie but a short way out of your direct route to Westmoreland ; communicate by gravelled roads with Dumfries and other places in the habitable globe. Were you to warn us of your approach, it might all be made easy enough. And then such a treat it would be to hear the sound of philosophy and literature in the hitherto quite savage wolds, where since the creation of the world no such music, scarcely even articulate speech, had been uttered or dreamed of ! Come, therefore, come and see us ; for we often long after you. Nay, I can promise too, that we are almost a unique sight in the British Empire ; such a quantity of German periodicals and mystic speculation embosomed in plain Scottish peat-moor being nowhere else that I know of to be met with.

In idle hours we sometimes project founding a sort of colony here, to be called the “ Misanthropic Society,” the settlers all to be men of a certain philosophic depth, and intensely sensible of the present state of literature ; each to have his own cottage, encircled with roses or thistles as he might prefer ; a library and pantry within, and huge stack of turf-fuel without ; fenced off from his neighbours by fir woods, and, when he pleased, by cast-metal railings, so that each might feel himself strictly as an individual, and free as a son of the wilderness ; but the whole settlement to meet

weekly over coffee, and there unite in their *Miserere*, or what were better, hurl forth their defiance, pity, expostulation, over the whole universe, civil, literary, and religious. I reckon this place a much fitter site for such an establishment than your Lake Country—a region abounding in natural beauty, but blown on by coach-horns, betrodden by picturesque tourists, and otherwise exceedingly desecrated by too frequent resort ; whereas here, though still in communication with the manufacturing world, we have a solitude altogether Druidical—grim hills tenanted chiefly by the wild grouse, tarns and brooks that have soaked and slumbered unmolested since the Deluge of Noah, and nothing to disturb you with speech, except Arcturus and Orion, and the Spirit of Nature, in the heaven and in the earth, as it manifests itself in anger or love, and utters its inexplicable tidings, unheard by mortal ear. Would *you* come hither and be king over us ; *then* indeed we had made a fair beginning, and the “Bog School” might snap its fingers at the “Lake School” itself, and hope to be one day recognised of all men.

But enough of this fooling. Better were it to tell you in plain prose what little can be said of my own welfare, and inquire in the same dialect after yours. It will gratify you to learn that here, in the desert, as in the crowded city, I am moderately active and well ; better <sup>in</sup> health, not worse ; and though active only on a small scale, yet in my own opinion honestly, and to as much result as has been usual with me at any time. We have horses to ride on, gardens to cultivate, tight walls and strong fires to defend us against winter ; books to read, paper to scribble on ; and no man or thing, at least in this visible earth, to make us afraid, for I reckon that so securely se-

questered are we, not only could no Catholic Rebellion, but even no new Hengist and Horsa invasion, in anywise disturb our tranquillity. True, we have no society ; but who has, in the strict sense of that word ? I have never had any worth speaking much about since I came into this world : in the next, it may be, they will order matters better. Meanwhile, if we have not the *wheat* in great quantity, we are nearly altogether free from the *chaff*, which often in this matter is highly annoying to weak nerves. My wife and I are busy learning Spanish ; far advanced in *Don Quixote* already. I purpose writing mystical reviews for somewhat more than a twelvemonth to come ; have Greek to read, and the whole universe to study (for I understand less and less of it) ; so that here as well as elsewhere I find that a man may “*dree his weird*” (serve out his earthly apprenticeship) with reasonable composure, and wait what the flight of years may bring him, little disappointed (unless he is a fool) if it brings him mere *nothing* save what he has already—a body and soul—more cunning and costly treasures than all Golconda and Potosi could purchase for him. What would the vain worm, man, be at ? Has he not a head, to speak of nothing else—a head (be it *with* a hat or without one) full of far richer things than Windsor Palace, or the Brighton Teapot added to it ? What are all Dresden picture-galleries and magazines *des arts et des métiers* to the strange paintings and thrice wonderful and thrice precious workmanship that goes on under the cranium of a beggar ? What *can* be added to him or taken from him by the hatred or love of all men ? The grey paper or the white silk paper in which the gold ingot is wrapped ; the gold is inalienable ; *he* is the gold. But truce to this moralising. I had a thousand things

to ask concerning you : your employments, purposes, suffering, and pleasures. Will you not write to me ? Will you not come to me and tell ? Believe it, you are well loved here, and none feels better than I what a spirit is for the present eclipsed in clouds. For the present it can only be ; time and chance are for all men ; that troublous season will end ; and one day with more joyful, not deeper truer regard, I shall see you "yourself again." Meanwhile, pardon me this intrusion ; and write, if you have a vacant hour which you would fill with a good action. Mr. Jeffrey is still anxious to know you ; has he ever succeeded ? We are not to be in Edinburgh, I believe, till spring ; but I will send him a letter to you (with your permission) by the first conveyance. Remember me with best regards to Professor Wilson and Sir W. Hamilton, neither of whom must forget me ; not omitting the honest Gordon, who I know will not.

The bearer of this letter is Henry Inglis, a young gentleman of no ordinary talent and worth, in whom, as I believe, *es steckt gar viel*. Should he call himself, pray let this be an introduction, for he reverences all spiritual worth, and you also will learn to love him. —With all friendly sentiments, I am ever, my dear Sir, most faithfully yours,

T. CARLYLE.



IX

## Oddities

Nothing.

*Alexander Pope (1688-1744)*

Calculating how much he has eaten and drunk.

*Sydney Smith (1771-1845)*

Unflattering remarks about Australia.

*Charles Lamb (1775-1835)*

A real life tragedy.

*Charles Dickens (1812-1870)*

Wherein a certain gentleman dies of a most unnatural disease.

*Charles Dickens (1812-1870)*

Boswell brought back to life.

*Charles Dickens (1812-1870)*

## NOTHING

*Alexander Pope to Henry Cromwell*

*April 27, 1708.*

I have nothing to say to you in this letter ; but I was resolved to write to tell you so. Why should not I content myself with so many great examples of deep divines, profound casuists, grave philosophers, who have written, not letters only, but whole tomes and voluminous treatises about nothing ? Why should a fellow like me, who all his life does nothing, be ashamed to write nothing ; and that to one who has nothing to do but read it ? But perhaps you will say, the whole world has something to do, something to talk of, something to wish for, something to be employed about : but pray, sir, cast up the account, put all these somethings together, and what is the sum total but just nothing ? I have no more to say, but to desire you to give my service (that is nothing) to your friends, and to believe that I am nothing more than your, etc.,

Ex nihilo nil fit.—Lucr.

## CALCULATING HOW MUCH HE HAS EATEN AND DRUNK

*Sydney Smith to Lord Murray*

*Combe Florey, September 29, 1843.*

You are, I hear, attending more to diet than her tofore. If you wish for anything like happiness the fifth act of life, eat and drink about one half

you could eat and drink. Did I ever tell you my calculation about eating and drinking? Having ascertained the weight of what I could live upon, so as to preserve health and strength, and what I did live upon, I found that, between ten and seventy years of age, I had eaten and drunk forty-four horse wagon loads of meat and drink more than would have preserved me in life and health! The value of this mass of nourishment I considered to be worth seven thousand pounds sterling. It occurred to me that I must, by my voracity, have starved to death fully a hundred persons. This is a frightful calculation, but irresistibly true; and I think, dear Murray, your wagons require an additional horse each!

#### UNFLATTERING REMARKS ABOUT AUSTRALIA

*Charles Lamb to Barron Field*

*August 31, 1817.*

MY DEAR BARRON,—The bearer of this letter so far across the seas is Mr. Lawrey, who comes out to you as a missionary, and whom I have been strongly importuned to recommend to you as a most worthy creature by Mr. Fenwick, a very old, honest friend of mine, of whom, if my memory does not deceive me, you have had some knowledge heretofore as editor of the *Statesman*—a man of talent, and patriotic. If you can show him any facilities in his arduous undertaking, you will oblige us much. Well, and how does the land of thieves use you? and how do you pass your time in your extra-judicial intervals? Going about the streets with a lantern, like Diogenes, looking for an honest man? You may look long enough, I fancy. Do give me some notion of manners of the inhabitants where you are. They

don't thieve all day long, do they? No human property could stand such continuous battery. And what do they do when they an't stealing?

Have you got a theatre? What pieces are performed? Shakespeare's, I suppose—not so much for the poetry, as for his having once been in danger of leav'ng his country on account of certain "small deer."

Have you poets among you? Cursed plagiarists, I fancy, if you have any. I would not trust an idea or a pocket-handkerchief of mine among 'em. You are almost competent to answer Lord Bacon's problem, whether a nation of atheists can subsist together. You are practically in one:—

"So thievish 'tis, that the eighth commandment itself  
Scarce seemeth there to be."

### A REAL LIFE TRAGEDY

*Charles Dickens to Maclige*

*Friday evening, March 12th, 1841.*

You will be greatly shocked and grieved to hear that the Raven is no more. He expired to-day at a few minutes after twelve o'clock at noon. He had been ailing for a few days, but we anticipated no serious result, conjecturing that a portion of the white paint he swallowed last summer might be lingering about his vitals without having any serious effect upon his constitution. Yesterday afternoon he was taken so much worse that I sent an express for the medical gentleman (Mr. Herring) who promptly attended and administered a powerful dose of castor oil. Under the influence of this medicine he recovered so fast as to be able at eight o'clock p.m. to bite Topping. His night was peaceful. This morning at daybreak

he appeared better ; received (agreeably to the doctor's directions) another dose of castor oil ; and partook plentifully of some warm gruel, the flavour of which he appeared to relish. Towards eleven o'clock he was so much worse that it was found necessary to muffle the stable knocker. At half-past, or thereabouts, he was heard talking to himself about the horse and Topping's family, and to add some incoherent expressions which are supposed to have been either a foreboding of his approaching dissolution, or some wishes relative to the disposal of his little property : consisting chiefly of half-pence which he had buried in different parts of the garden. On the clock striking twelve he appeared slightly agitated, but he soon recovered, walking twice or thrice along the coach-house, stopped to bark, staggered, exclaimed "*Halloo, old girl!*" (his favourite expression), and died.

He behaved throughout with decent fortitude, equanimity, and self-possession, which cannot be too much admired. I deeply regret that being in ignorance of his danger I did not attend to receive his last instructions. Something remarkable about his eyes occasioned Topping to run for the doctor at twelve. When they returned together our friend was gone. It was the medical gentleman who informed me of his decease. He did it with great caution and delicacy, preparing me by the remark that "*a jolly queer start had taken place ;*" but the shock was very great notwithstanding. I am not wholly free from suspicion of poison. A malicious butcher has been heard to say that he would "*do*" for him : his plea was that he would not be molested in taking orders down the mews by any bird that wore a tail. Other persons have also been heard to threaten : among

others, Charles Knight, who has just started a weekly publication price fourpence: *Barnaby* being, as you know, threepence. I have directed a post-mortem examination, and the body has been removed to Mr. Herring's school of anatomy for that purpose.

I could wish, if you can take the trouble, that you could inclose this to Forster, immediately after you have read it. I cannot discharge the painful task of communication more than once. Were they ravens who took manna to somebody in the wilderness? At times I hope they were, and at others I fear they were not, or they would certainly have stolen it by the way. In profound sorrow, I am ever your bereaved friend C. D. Kate is as well as can be expected but terribly low as you may suppose. The children seem rather glad of it. He bit their ankles. But that was play.

WHEREIN A CERTAIN GENTLEMAN DIES OF A MOST UN-NATURAL DISEASE

*Charles Dickens to Mr. Felton*

Broadstairs, Kent, *September 1, 1843.*

MY DEAR FELTON,—If I thought it in the nature of things that you and I could ever agree on paper, touching a certain Chuzzlewitian question where-upon Forster tells me you have remarks to make, I should immediately walk into the same, tooth and nail. But as I don't, I won't. Contenting myself with the prediction, that one of these years and days, you will write or say to me: "My dear Dickens, you were right, though rough, and did a world of good, though you got most thoroughly hated for it." To which I shall reply: "My dear Felton, I looked a long way off and not immediately under my nose."

. . . At which sentiment you will laugh, and I shall laugh ; and then (for I foresee this will all happen in my land) we shall call for another pot of porter and two or three dozens of oysters.

Now, don't you in your own heart and soul quarrel with me for this long silence ?

Not half so much as I quarrel with myself, I know ; but if you could read half the letters I write to you in imagination, you would swear by me for the best of correspondents. The truth is, that when I have done my morning's work, down goes my pen, and from that minute I feel it a positive impossibility to take it up again, until imaginary butchers and bakers wave me to my desk. I walk about brimful of letters, facetious descriptions touching morsels, and pathetic friendships, but can't for the soul of me uncork myself. The post-office is my rock ahead. My average number of letters that *must* be written every day is, at the least, a dozen. And you could no more know what I was writing about spiritually, from the perusal of the bodily thirteenth, than you could tell from my hat what was going on in my head, or could hear my heart on the surface of my flannel waistcoat.

This is a little fishing place ; intensely quiet ; built on a cliff, whereon—in the centre of a tiny semi-circular bay—our house stands ; the sea rolling and dashing under the windows. Seven miles out are the Goodwin Sands (you've heard of the Goodwin Sands ?) whence floating lights perpetually wink after dark, as if they were carrying on intrigues with the servants. Also there is a big lighthouse called the North Foreland on a hill behind the village, a severe parsonic light, which reproves the young and giddy floaters, and stares grimly out upon the sea.

Under the cliff are rare good sands, where all the children assemble every morning and throw up impossible fortifications, which the sea throws down again at high water. Old gentlemen and ancient ladies flirt after their own manner in two reading-rooms and on a great many scattered seats in the open air.

Other old gentlemen look all day through telescopes and never see anything. In a bay-window in a one-pair sits, from nine o'clock to one, a gentleman with rather long hair and no neck-cloth, who writes and grins as if he thought he were very funny indeed. His name is Boz. At one he disappears, and presently emerges from a bathing-machine, and may be seen—a kind of salmon-coloured porpoise—splashing about in the ocean. After that he may be seen in another bay-window on the ground floor, eating a strong lunch ; after that, walking a dozen miles or so, or lying on his back in the sand reading a book. Nobody bothers him unless they know he is disposed to be talked to ; and I am told he is very comfortable indeed. He's as brown as a berry, and they *do* say is a small fortune to the innkeeper who sells beer and cold punch. But this is mere rumour. Sometimes he goes up to London (eighty miles, or so, away), and then I'm told there is a sound in Lincoln's Inn Fields at night, as men laughing, together with a clinking of knives and forks and wine glasses. . . .

I often dream that I am in America again ; but, strange to say, I never dream of you. I am always endeavouring to get home in disguise, and have a dreary sense of distance. *A propos* of dreams, is it not a strange thing if writers of fiction never dream of their own creations ; recollecting, I suppose, even in their dreams, that they have no real existence ? I never dream of any of my characters, and I feel it so

impossible that I would wager Scott never did of his, real as they are. I had a good piece of absurdity in my head a night or two ago. I dreamed that somebody was dead. I don't know who, but it's not to the purpose. It was a private gentleman, or a particular friend ; and I was greatly overcome when the news was broken to me (very delicately) by a gentleman in a cocked hat, top boots, and a sheet. Nothing else. "Good God !" I said, "is he dead ?" "He is as dead, sir," rejoined the gentleman, "as a door-nail. But we must all die, Mr. Dickens, sooner or later, my dear sir." "Ah !" I said, "Yes, to be sure. Very true. But what did he die of ?" The gentleman burst into a flood of tears, and said in a voice broken by emotion : "He christened his youngest child, Sir, with a toasting fork." I never in my life was so affected as at his having fallen a victim to this complaint. It carried a conviction to my mind that he never could have recovered. I knew that it was the most interesting and fatal malady in the world ; and I wrung the gentleman's hand in a convulsion of respectful admiration, for I felt that this explanation did equal honour to his head and heart.

BOSWELL BROUGHT BACK TO LIFE

*Charles Dickens to Wilkie Collins*

Lord Warden Hotel, Dover,

*Friday Evening, May 24, 1861.*

MY DEAR WILKIE,—I am delighted to receive so good an account of last night, and have no doubt that it was a thorough success. Now it is over, I may honestly say that I am glad you were (by your friendship) forced into the Innings, for there is no doubt that it is of immense importance to a public man in our way to have his wits as his tongue's end. Sir

(as Dr. Johnson would have said), if it be not irrational in a man to count his feathered bipeds before they are hatched, we will conjointly astonish them next year. *Boswell* : Sir, I hardly understand you. *Johnson* : Sir, you never understand anything. *Boswell* (in a sprightly manner) : Perhaps, Sir, I am all the better for it. *Johnson* (savagely) : Sir, I do not know but that you are. There is Lord Carlisle (smiling) ; he never understands anything, and yet the dog's well enough. Then, Sir, there is Forster ; he understands many things, and yet the fellow is fretful. Again, Sir, there is Dickens, with a facile way with him—like Davy, Sir, like Davy—yet I am told that the man is lying at a hedge ale-house by the sea-shore in Kent, as long as they will trust him. *Boswell* : But there are no hedges by the sea in Kent, Sir. *Johnson* : And why not, Sir ? *Boswell* (at a loss) : I don't know Sir, unless— *Johnson* (thundering) : Let us have no unlesses, Sir. If your father had never said "unless," he would never have begotten you, Sir. *Boswell* (yielding) : Sir, that is very true.



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